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MARCH 2002

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PCZONE

CONTENTS

THE THING

The classic sci-fi horror returns to PC

PAGE 36

66

COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE

Can Westwood do to action games what it did for real-time strategy?



PLAYTEST PREVIEW

GLOBAL OPERATIONS

88

We play the latest challenger to the Counter-Strike throne



52 JEDI KNIGHT II

The Force is strong in this one

FREEDOM FORCE

56



WIN THE
TOP 10
PC GAMES
SEE THE PC ZONE CHARTS
PAGE 24

- NEW GAMES**
- 66 **COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE**
 - 70 **SID MEIER'S SIM GOLF**
 - 74 **SALT LAKE 2002**



ON THE CDS

FULL DETAILS PAGE 128

SALT LAKE 2002

DIE HARD: NAKATOMI PLAZA

ETHERLORDS



THE THING
ROLLING DEMO
EXTRA MAPS FOR DEUS EX,
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REVIEWS

NEW GAMES

- 66 **COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE**
- 70 **SID MEIER'S SIM GOLF**
- 74 **SALT LAKE 2002**

- 76 **STAR TREK ARMADA II**
- 78 **COSSACKS: THE ART OF WAR**
- 79 **UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: SEASON 2001/2002**
- 81 **GORASUL**
- 82 **ROCK MANAGER**
- 100 **RAYMAN M**
- 100 **THE AMAZING VIRTUAL SEA-MONKEYS**
- 101 **WWII: IWO JIMA**
- 101 **RALLY TROPHY**
- 102 **DIGGLES**
- 102 **UPLINK**

BUDGET GAMES

- 104 **ULTIMATE QUAKE PACK**
- 104 **PROJECT IGI**
- 104 **DOOM: COLLECTOR'S EDITION**
- 105 **CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER - SEASON 2000/01**
- 105 **SOLDIER OF FORTUNE: PLATINUM EDITION**
- 105 **XPLOSIVE TOP 10**
- 105 **GANGSTERS 2**
- 105 **HITMAN: CODENAME 47**

NEWS

- 10 **UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2**
Return of the deathmatch classic.
- 12 **LORD OF THE RINGS**
One of many.
- 14 **DEUS EX 2**
The biggest RPG of the year.
- 22 **EMULATION ZONE**
Namco classics unlocked.
- 30 **DUNGEON SIEGE**
Total and utter annihilation.

REGULARS


- 32 **MAILBOX**
Just to prove we do actually care.
- 106 **FEEDBACK**
Join us in our opinion den.
- 108 **REALITY CHECK**
There's snow-one like Steve Hill.
- 113 **HARDWARE REVIEWS**
Terratec's new soundcard.
- 114 **GADGETS**
Toys for the boys and girls.

PREVIEWS

- 36 **THE THING**
- 42 **SOLDIER OF FORTUNE 2**
- 46 **DIE HARD: NAKATOMI PLAZA**
- 48 **BEACH LIFE**
- 50 **VIRTUA TENNIS**
- 52 **JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST**
- 56 **FREEDOM FORCE**
- 60 **HITMAN 2**

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PAGE 118
WIN!
A SET OF
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COURTESY OF TOK



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LICENCE TO CHILL



Typical. Just when you thought you could rely on top executives treating their prize assets like dirt (please tell me you that you took our advice and didn't waste your money on any of the following: *Evil Dead: Hail To The King*, *The Mummy*, *From Dusk Till Dawn*), they go and shift the goalposts.

When we first heard that *The Thing* was going to morph into a game we were pretty sceptical. It is, after all, one of the finest and scariest pieces of celluloid in existence and the ZONE boys (and girl) were of the opinion that something this good shouldn't be messed with. This, despite the fact that both the setting and the plot would translate into a brilliant survival horror title.

Then we heard that UK-based development house Computer Artworks were behind the title and we got straight on the phone and demanded an audience with them. (Computer Artworks, if you're not aware, had a modicum of success with a game called *Evolva*, and while it didn't exactly set the world on fire it was highly original and it looked stunning, the two factors that convinced Universal that these were the right people to make the game.) They agreed, we managed to poke around in their offices to our heart's content and the net result is a

stunning six-page preview (see page 36) that provides the proof that this game is set to be something special.

"The Thing isn't just a cheap remake of the film. How would that provide suspense when we all know what's going to happen?"

With a firm commitment to innovation, *The Thing* isn't just a cheap remake of the film. How would that provide suspense when we all know what's going to happen? Instead it takes its starting point from the end of the film, with Kurt Russell and chum freezing to death and wondering whether that's the worst that's going to happen to them. It's a clever move, not least because it's going to appeal to the millions and millions of *Thing* obsessives who've been clamouring for a sequel since 1982. I'm not too proud to say that I'm one of them.

And just before I go, check out page 146, which gives you a few teasers for our next issue. We've been hard at work on a mini-redesign, improving the content and sharpening up the look of your favourite games' mag. We're pretty pleased with the results but you're the ones that matter and you'll be able to get your hands on the fruits of our labour on March 7. See you then.

Dave Woods
Editor



Ⓢ Bloody disgusting,
just the way we like it...

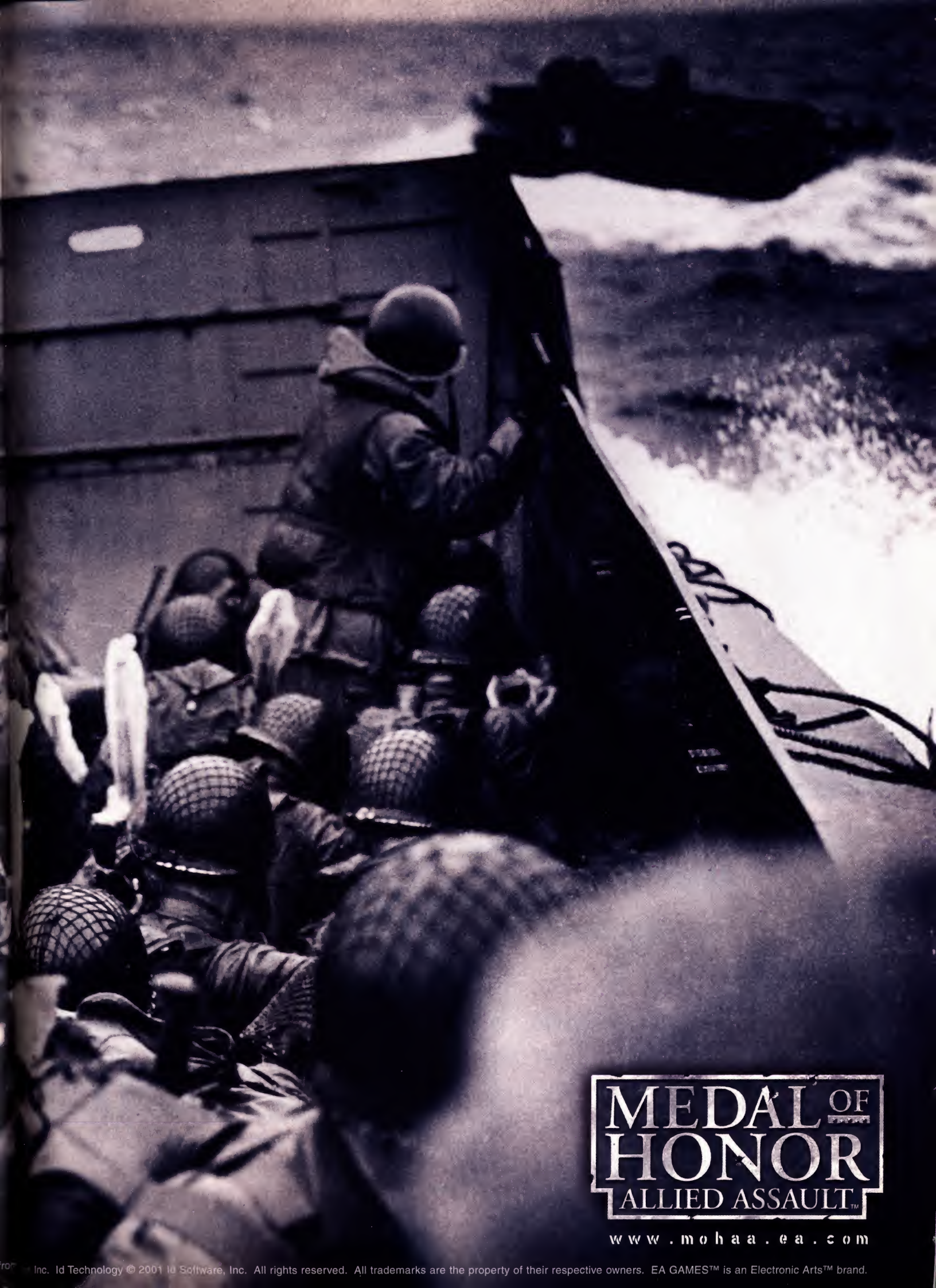
D-DAY. JUNE 6TH, 1944.

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PC CD-ROM

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TOP STORY

Hot fragging action...

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Digital Extremes
PUBLISHER Infogrames
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Q3 2002
WEBSITE www.digitalextremes.com

IN SUMMARY

The sequel to one of the pre-eminent multiplayer shooters, *UTII* is set to be the first of a new generation of arena-based FPSs. The multiplayer game will essentially be an enhanced version of the original, though features such as driveable vehicles should shake things up a bit, while team management features promise to boost the single-player experience.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

UTII uses the latest *Unreal* engine technology to create truly next-gen graphics, and the playability should at least match that of its superb predecessor.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT II

Dust off your Flak Cannon – a legend is about to return

★ **MOUSE SMASHER** Anthony Holden

Most of your favourite weapons will return, including the Minigun, Shock Rifle and Flak Cannon.



With the new Link Gun, you can lock on to a team-mate and double his firepower.



Cutting-edge physics-based behaviour is promised for characters and environments.



One of the five new races in the game: the glam rocker.

It's official – after we were the first to break the news to the world on our website last December, and the news spread around the net like VD on a scout camp shortly thereafter, Infogrames has finally come clean about *Unreal Tournament II*. Not only does the game exist, it's been in secret development at Digital Extremes for over a year now and is scarcely six months from completion.

As gobsmacked as we were at this revelation, there's actually very little to get surprised about. Not only was the announcement inevitable given the imminent release of *Unreal II*, but the sequel to the world's second favourite online shooter (at last count) picks up very much where its forerunner left off. The range of ten weapons has altered a little, the 30 new levels are bigger, the bots are smarter and the character models more outlandish, but essentially it's business as usual. Except of course that the whole thing looks

absolutely gorgeous courtesy of Epic's latest cutting-edge engine technology, essentially the same as that being used in *Unreal II*, which is nice.

In fact, the biggest changes to gameplay are in the single-player bot battles, where team management and strategy have been introduced to add depth to proceedings. You'll create a team from the 50-odd new characters in the game, each possessing varying abilities and characteristics, and build it into an invincible fighting unit by upping the abilities of your fellows or hiring better players. You'll also be able to specify positions and fighting styles for your team members.

“The levels are bigger, the bots smarter and the character models more outlandish, but essentially it's business as usual”

The idea of this is to give the game more of the flavour of a sport (in the spirit of *Speedball 2*), where you're vying to improve your ranking and

perfect your tactics rather than simply progressing through levels. This logic has also been applied to the multiplayer side, where five game modes have been chosen according to their sporting potential. So you've got vanilla and team-based Deathmatch and Capture The Flag, but also Domination, Survivor and 'Bombing Run', in which a bomb must be dropped in the enemy base, but can also be passed around like a rugby ball.

and new special moves expanding on the dodge feature from the first *UT*, such as double jumps, super-speed and berserker. You'll also spawn with a full complement of weapons, bar certain 'super-weapons' including an Ion Cannon (which fires down from a satellite) and a guided nuclear device. In addition, ammo, armour and health pick-ups have been replaced by recharge stations.

Whether these ideas can put the *UT* name back atop the FPS podium remains to be seen; the only certainty is that graphical splendour will not be the source of any disappointment. **EW**

Other significant changes are the inclusion of small driveable vehicles





TOP STORY

Hello my precious...

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER WXP Inc

PUBLISHER Universal Interactive

ETA Christmas 2002

WEBSITE www.lotr.com

IN SUMMARY

The most successful book this side of the bible, fast on its way to spawning the most successful film of all time, so naturally Universal is going to squeeze the Tolkien cow for all the hobbit-milk it can get. In this case approximately eight different games based on the series.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

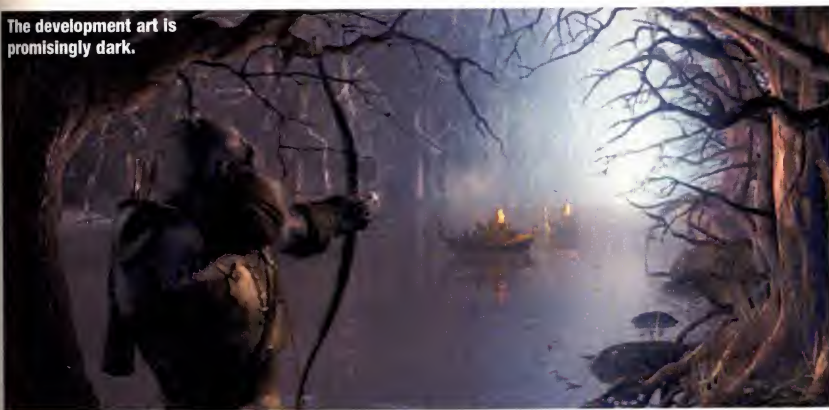
The eight games may be spread over different platforms but at least we PC owners can look forward to both a single-player title and a massively multiplayer online game (based around the dice 'n' paper Middle-Earth role-playing system, apparently).

THE LORD OF THE RINGS

One ring to rule them, but about eight games to play them

★ **SINGING ABOUT GOLD** Paul Presley

The development art is promisingly dark.



That looks nothing like Elijah Wood.



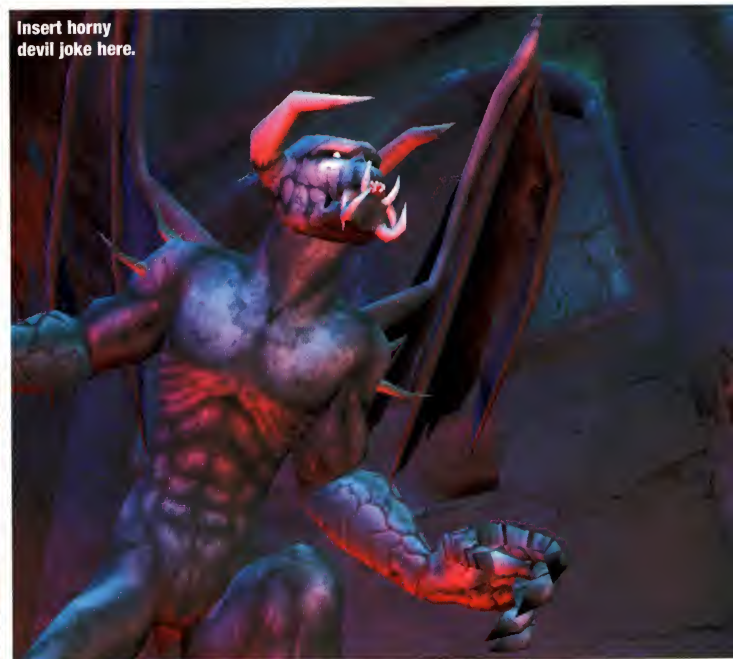
No they're not orcs, they're trolls.



Weathertop will look something like this.



A strong *Zelda* influence is evident in the action/adventure title.



Insert horny devil joke here.

If you're not a big fan of orcs and wizards and people shouting, "For the glory!" every ten minutes, 2002 probably won't be the best of years for you. You've already had to put up with the boy Potter and his media omnipresence last year, but that was giant rat feed compared to the phenomenon that is *The Lord Of The Rings*. As we all wait for the second film in the series to arrive later this year, Tolkienites will be able to keep themselves amused with the virtual incarnations, currently massing at the gaming world's borders like some dark army of evil bent on conquest.

You may have been aware of the various legal shenanigans surrounding the games but to bring you up to speed: EA has the licence to create games based on the three films (none of which have yet been revealed) while Vivendi/Sierra/Universal/VU Games/whatever it calls itself this week has the rights to create games

based on the original books. So just to be clearer than a man made of clingfilm, today we're looking at the Universal titles.

The plan is quite an ambitious (and potentially very lucrative) one. At least eight games spread not only across the

“You'll be journeying from the cramped huts of Hobbiton to the dizzy heights of the bridge of Khazad Dum, sticking closely to the first 14 chapters of the book”

three books, but also across just about every current gaming platform known to man or elf. And if they just happen to come out around the same time as the films, well that'll just be pure coincidence we're sure.

Presently Universal has confirmed two of the titles and hinted at two others. Sadly the confirmed titles are just an isometric RPG on the GameBoy Advance and a third-person action/adventure romp on the Xbox, but the indications coming from our sources on the inside suggest that the

Xbox game will bear more than a passing resemblance to the PC version.

The Fellowship Of The Ring takes the players through the first of the books, either in the hairy feet of Frodo, the pointy hat of Gandalf or the, er, cloth britches of Aragorn. You'll be

journeying from the cramped huts of Hobbiton to the dizzy heights of the bridge of Khazad-Dum, sticking closely to the first 14 chapters of the book. You'll be pitting your wits against Orcs, Ringwraiths, the Balrog and (maybe) even Gollum.

The other biggie is the MMORPG. Not much in the way of details yet but fans of odd-shaped dice and lead miniatures will be thrilled to hear that it's to be based on the tabletop Middle-Earth role-playing system. Which combats the problem of making

something open-ended out of an inherently linear setting.

It's unlikely we'll see the PC titles before the end of this year, but hopefully Universal will get them out in time to surf the wave of hype that's set to follow the release of the second film. No escape for hobbit-haters then. **[E2]**





Unleashing a super-sequel...

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Ion Storm Austin

PUBLISHER Eidos

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Spring 2003

WEBSITE www.deus-ex.org

IN SUMMARY

High-brow sci-fi tech fantasy from a first-person perspective. Lots of gadgets, weapons, conversations, deals, assassinations and bodily upgrades. It's sorta like a darker version of *The Six Million Dollar Man*.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

The original *Deus Ex* blew us away, and this sequel – with pretty much the same development team as before – sounds even better. Ion Storm Austin really knows how to make immersive action games and we're sure this one will be a pinnacle achievement. We can hardly contain ourselves.

DEUS EX 2

The developers are keeping tight-lipped. But we've managed to glean a few facts...

★ **AUGMENTED REPORTER** Paul Mallinson



TOP STORY



Apparently the *Thief 3* and *DX2* programmers are working closely together.

Too much augmentation and you'll end up looking like this.



"Remember the other empty clone tank in Area 51...?" says Ion Storm when asked about *DX2*'s storyline.



This game will be single-player only. Get over it.

Now this is a big game. *Deus Ex 2* by Ion Storm Austin. Sequel to the amazing *Deus Ex* – winner of more than 35 Game of the Year awards worldwide, including ours. Led by the legendary Warren Spector, the developers are pulling out all the stops to refine their futuristic action RPG franchise and are pretty much starting from scratch. The neo-sci-fi setting, some old characters and some old locations will stay, but almost everything else will change.

For starters, this time you'll be able to play as either a boy or a girl, and your choice will have an obvious effect on NPC responses.

Secondly: Augmentation – the upgradeable skills that drive the player character – are to be much simplified this time, with three upgrade levels instead of four. The developers are removing redundant skills, merging others, and enhancing those that almost worked last time, but

didn't quite. There will also be a complete set of black market Augmentations purchasable from dodgy men in dark alleys.

Critically, gameplay will be even more open-ended this time, and the environments much more tactile. Almost everything will be moveable or breakable. The developers claim that, at times, *Deus Ex 2* will become

"The storyline is a closely guarded secret, though we do know that it's to be set some 15 years after the original"

something of a "sandbox". Which, in plain English means you'll be able to just experiment with whatever you find to make your own fun. Whether we'll get to throw dead bodies off skyscrapers again, though, is anyone's guess...

This time Ion Storm really want the player to be able to complete the game without touching a weapon. This is something they wanted to do for the

first *Deus Ex*, but time constraints meant a lack of fine-tuning, making the unarmed approach extraordinarily hard. In *Deus Ex 2* taking the stealthy route will be a much more enjoyable experience. That said, a slew of new ordnance is also to be included for trigger-happy *Deus Ex*-

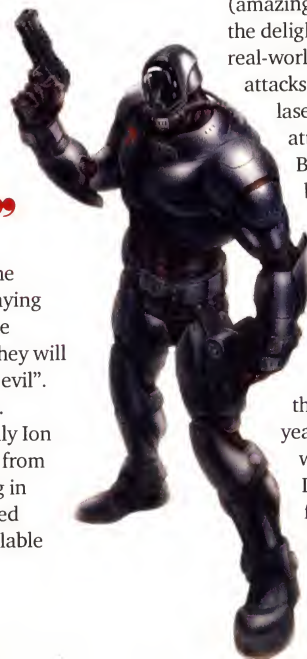
kateers, but all the developers are saying about those at the moment is that they will be "devilish, just evil". Which is no help.

Technologically Ion Storm is starting from scratch, licensing in the most advanced middleware available

for both graphics (*Unreal Warfare* engine) and physics (Ireland-based Havok engine), as well as dedicating crack in-house teams to AI, sound, graphics and modelling. We've already seen what *Unreal Warfare* looks like (amazing), but we've yet to experience the delights of the latest advances in real-world physics. In *DX2* bounce attacks will be possible, including

lasers off mirrors, and concussive attacks that knock things over. Bodies and other objects will bounce more correctly (looks good on the skyscraper front then – Ed) and climbing will become more of an issue.

The storyline is a closely guarded secret at the moment, though we do know that *DX2* is to be set some 15 years after the original, and will feature the return of JC Denton in some way. An older, fatter JC Denton? Now that would be funny. [E2]



BULLETIN

Playing Fields RIP

NEWS EDITOR Anthony Holden



We didn't believe the rumours at first, but they were soon confirmed by the official

word on the forum – The Playing Fields is no more. Long-time friend of PC ZONE, The Playing Fields was more than just a bar with a few networked PCs and a slightly disturbing smell of beery, unwashed gamers, it was one of the strongest supporters of the UK gaming scene and the concept of online gaming as a whole. Edward, Charles and co were committed to promoting gaming as both a professional sport and a legitimate entertainment medium, and the closure of The Playing Fields is a great loss to the UK games industry, not to mention folks like us who used to wander down there for a bit of fragging and a cold lemon squash of an evening. We're very grateful to them for their help over the years, and wish them the best in their future endeavours. For more about this, turn to the back page of Online Zone.

On a happier note, loads of shiny new games have been announced. Some overpaid marketing dunce has apparently thrown a handful of bones on the ground, mumbled an obscene incantation and discovered that the post-Christmas lull is the ordained time to announce all their new games and add-on packs. So in these pages we find *Gothic 2*, *Sudden Strike 2*, *Battle Realms 2*, *Half-Life 2*... OK maybe not the last one, but you catch my drift. For me, the game that threatens to cast all of these into insignificance is the subject of our Top Story on page 14, where, incidentally, we welcome back an old friend of ZONE's. But of course, you've read that already, right?

Sudden strike's back

More of the same and a few things that aren't, in *Sudden Strike 2*



Fight across the South Pacific with the new Japanese units.



Direct your guns in coastal assaults.



Fortifications are formidable, and you can direct landing assaults.

Previously known for soft porn rubbish like *Lula* and *Days Of Oblivion*, German publisher CDV shot into respectability almost overnight with 1999's strategy gem *Sudden Strike*. Unsurprisingly then, we hear CDV is set to release *Sudden Strike 2*, sequel to one of the best WWII-themed games of recent years. Happily we can report that *Sudden Strike 2* will utilise an enhanced version of its predecessor's isometric engine, since despite the original's flat environments, the interface was one of the best on offer. Aside from adding a few proper hills, *Sudden Strike 2* will add a whole heap of new features, and, as well as new European missions, we can expect to fight against or alongside the Imperial Japanese forces across South East Asia and the islands of the South Pacific. Consequently then, there will be dozens of new and enhanced units, from new planes like the B-17 bomber and P-51 Mustang, to pretty much every Japanese unit you care to mention. Additionally, the Japs can

fly kamikaze planes into ships, the Krauts can launch V2 rocket strikes and the Reds will have trucks behind the frontline blaring out communist propaganda.

Further enhancements include airfields from which you can re-arm transport planes, fighters and bombers, troop trains, the ability to capture tanks and officers, and there's even talk of using engineers to build tunnels. One completely new and very welcome feature is that you can control landing craft and direct shore bombardments before a beach landing, and mount troops on tanks for lightning strikes, rather than cram your soldiers into paper-thin trucks. Hopefully we'll have a chance to play with some early code in the very near future, until then may we suggest you visit the game's forums, where new features and screenshots seem to be revealed on a regular basis.

EMULATION ZONE

Namco's arcade genius let loose

P:22



THE PCZONE CHARTS

Read 'em, love 'em, win 'em

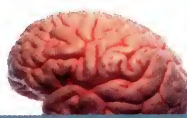
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TECH HEAD

The latest developments in PC gaming technology

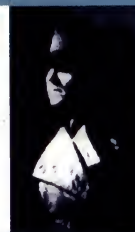
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MAN WHO KNOWS

It's all too easy in this dirty industry

P:26



The Y-Team

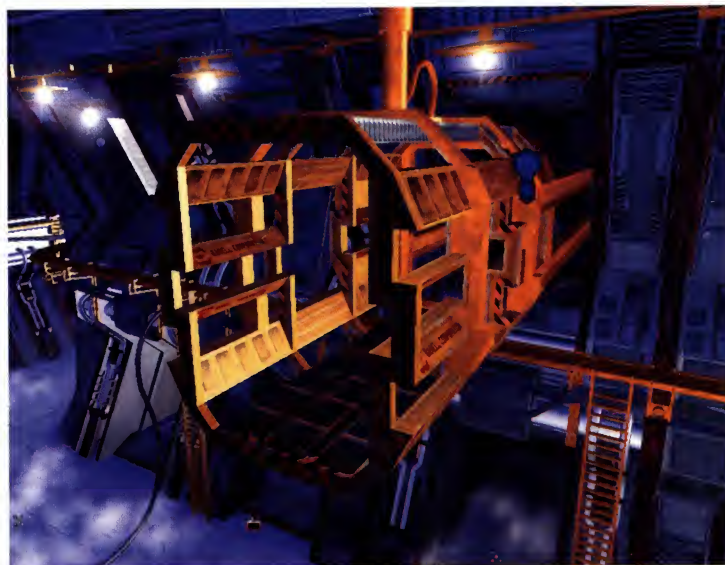
Unreal-powered FPS *The Y-Project* gets its first airing

The power of the latest *Unreal* engine has been well-documented in these pages.

The leader of a new generation of 3D engines (at least until Carmack shows his hand), it's been designed to dovetail with moves made by our friends at Nvidia and ATI, and is set to bring us the biggest leap in graphical quality since, well, the first *Unreal*. It's also proving increasingly popular as middleware, and one of the smaller developers taking advantage of Epic's technology is German-based Westka. Although

previously responsible for the execrable *Arcatera*, they have since strengthened their talent base and put a together a very credible team to work on a large-scale first-person action game called *The Y-Project*. We visited Westka recently to have a look at the game, and while still in a very early state, it shows plenty of youthful promise.

The setting is a mishmash of sci-fi influences, with a domed city and mining colony à la *Total Recall*, futuristic metropolis courtesy of *Blade Runner* and ravaging bug hordes lifted from *Starship Troopers*. The latter are your antagonist, as you take the role of a



Ⓜ It's *Unreal*-powered, so it can't help but look good.

highly trained operative seeking to save the embattled colony from the insectoids and unravel the secret of their existence.



Gameplay will be strongly narrative based, though given a twist by your ability to switch loyalty between two competing factions – military and scientific – at various stage through the game. Each will offer a different set of weapons and

gadgets for your services, with a corresponding shift in playing style – from blindly blasting your way through the insect ranks to employing a little more stealth and thought.

The inclusion of puzzle elements and an RPG-style upgrade tree will add further depth to proceedings.

It's a bit too early to start passing judgements on *The Y-Project*, but we're extremely grateful they didn't make *Arcatera 2*.

Ⓜ The characters have a distinctive, stylised look that may not be well-received outside of Europe.

Westka Interactive • ETA Q1 2003
www.y-pro.net

Sand storm

The *Ghost Recon* team get down in the desert

Ghost Recon was superb. If we had any lingering doubts about this, they were dispelled when we found ourselves still playing the game after the dust had settled from the big Christmas shooter showdown. However, the end of the single-player campaign did turn out to be one of those classic gaming anti-climaxes, so we were very much relieved when Ubi Soft announced the first of several mission packs for their excellent tactical FPS, scheduled to ship this March.

Currently without a formal title, the add-on will take the *Ghost Recon* chaps

to the harsh desert conditions of North Africa, attempting to resolve a hypothetical conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea in eight new single-player missions. Several new multiplayer maps will be featured, along with a handful of new weapons, vehicles and enemies. The sound and visuals will get a bit of a polish too.

Tactical shooter veteran Red Storm has shot back to form with *Ghost Recon*, and we are expecting very good things from this imminent add-on.

Red Storm • ETA March • www.redstorm.com



Ⓜ No more hiding behind clumps of grass out here.

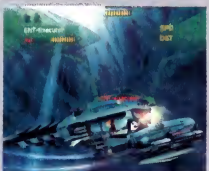
SHORTS

BATTLE REALMS 2



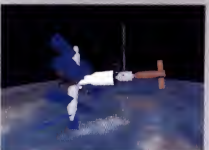
Yes, you read right: in the wake of the success of oriental-themed RTS *Battle Realms*, creator Ed Del Castillo has announced both a major expansion pack and a full sequel to the game. Currently in advanced development at Liquid Entertainment, *Battle Realms: Winter Of The Wolf* will add the usual slew of new units, missions and gameplay enhancements and should appear around mid-year. No concrete details on the sequel as yet, but it too is scheduled to appear later this year. Since Ed is famously against the kind of bland sequelitis that afflicted his former employee Westwood, you can safely expect a thoroughly fresh experience.

BACK TO THE DEEP



JoWood has announced that it will be publishing the sequel to last year's disappointing undersea shooter *Aquanox*. Currently dubbed *Aquanox - To Be Continued*, the follow-up will continue the story of deep sea tough guy Emerald Flint, and feature a far greater emphasis on multiplayer. Let's hope they drop all the stupid conversations and concentrate on the stunning graphics this time.

THE UNIVERSE ON YOUR PC



While not a game by any stretch of the imagination, *Celestia* is an astounding achievement that may be of interest to space buffs. It's basically a highly detailed model of the known universe, a real-time simulation of space that 'lets you visit planets, moons, asteroids, and spacecraft in our solar system or beyond to one of over 100,000 stars and any known extrasolar planet'. Accurately simulated wherever possible, and using informed guesswork where not, it's free, open-source, runs in Windows and Unix and version 1.2.0 has just been made available at www.shatters.net/celestia.

Look who's orking

A respectable first outing quickly becomes a franchise with *Gothic 2*

Reviewed only last issue, *Gothic* was a straightforward action RPG with a great graphics engine but some serious design flaws – in other words just the kind of game for which you'd love to see a second-chance sequel. Happily, developer Piranha Bytes recently released the first images of *Gothic 2*, revealing a similarly-styled and equally pretty follow-up to the stat-heavy smite-'em-up.

Picking up precisely where the first game left off (with your successful escape

from the prison colony), the sequel hopes to avoid much of the aimlessness of the first title by thrusting you straight into a much more intricate and epic storyline. This time around, a dimensional crack is unleashing legions of foul demons into the world, and simultaneously acting as a beacon for armies of savage Orks. The demon charmer Xardas is doing his level best to widen the crack and cast the world into darkness, and apparently you're the sucker that's been sent to stop him.

It's something of a surprise that the sequel seems so far to have escaped the obligatory overblown RPG sub-title – *Gothic 2: The Diabolical Crevice* or some such – but we suppose there's still time. Indeed, no release date has been set at this stage, though given the use of the existing engine and gameplay mechanics we wouldn't be completely bowled over if they squeezed it out by Christmas.

Piranha Bytes • ETA TBA • www.jowood.com



① Dimensional cracks, hungry wolves, soggy tunic, what next?



① The first game proved visually compelling and this should be no different.

Far trek

Cult sci-fi series *Farscape* begets its first game

F*arscape* is the sort of TV show that provokes howls of derision on first glance, partly because it looks like a cheap *Trek* rip-off, and partly because it's full of muppets. Despite this, it's managed to gain quite a foothold in the sci-fi community, revealing itself as something a bit different from any of the existing sci-fi programmes, as well as being surprisingly watchable. Not that we've ever watched it, of course. Absolute rubbish, and besides that Rygel is such a self-important git.

In any case, the next step towards credibility is apparently to make a 3D action-adventure based on the series, and who better to trust with the licence than Scottish developer Red Lemon, creator of the ambitious but rather ordinary *Braveheart*. Currently simply titled *Farscape*, the game looks a little like a sci-fi version of *Diablo*, with a similar 3/4 viewpoint and control interface, though in this case the camera is fully manipulable. Six of the lead characters from the series will be playable, each possessing his own strengths and unique skills, while the gameplay offers up a familiar mix of exploration, puzzle-solving and point and click combat. We just hope they take it easy with the muppets.

Red Lemon • ETA Summer • www.redlemon.com



① Crichton looks as lost as ever.



① You can even circle-strafe.



① The six playable characters can be controlled individually or in a squad of three.



Well, I've never flown one before, but how hard can it be?

Zero tolerance

Go anywhere, destroy everything in *Cold Zero*

For all those of you who persistently swear that you rate gameplay over graphics, here could be a chance to put your money where your mouth is. Low budget 3D action-adventure *Cold Zero – The Last Stand* may be a bit behind the curve with its top-down 3/4 viewpoint and low-res visuals, but it shows all the signs of being chock full of old skool gameplay values. Taking the role of John McAffrey, ex-SWAT sharpshooter and certified hard man, it's your task to hunt down and kill the terrorists who stole the deadly Cold Zero virus from the bio-weaponry facility where you work. Luckily this seems to entail running around with a variety of whopping great guns, mowing down everything in sight. Tanks, jeeps and other vehicles can be commandeered, just about every environmental object will blow up given enough encouragement, and any building left standing can usually be entered. Good old fashioned fun, then.

Drago Entertainment • ETA Q2 2002 • www.jowood.com



Hang on, I don't remember *The Sims* looking this good...

Fake escape

Even pretend people need a break sometimes

Despite fear of backlash from hardcore *Sims* haters, we thought we should mention the next chart-limpet on the way from the folks at Maxis, *The Sims On Holiday*. As the more perceptive among you may have already partially gleaned from the title, this latest expansion to the insanely popular voyeurism simulator allows you to take your little computer people on a well-deserved holiday. As with the recent *Hot Date*, *On Holiday* opens up a new area for you to customise and let your Sims loose in, this time a getaway spot called Holiday Island. Once again there will be up to ten lots for you to build on, themed into alpine, beach and forest areas, a bunch of new activities and more than 120 new items. The big difference is that this time you can take the whole family along. Needless to say, it's going to move units like shit off a stick.

Maxis • ETA Spring • www.thesims.com

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SHORTS

NEW DUKE REVEALED

While the world waits impatiently for *Duke Nukem Forever*, Arush Entertainment has announced a firm spring 2002 release date for the first episode of their upcoming third-person scrolling shooter *Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project*. Set in the streets and sewers of New York, the game will feature everyone's favourite heroic archetype in a mostly side-on 3D perspective, battling mutants, rescuing chicks and spouting all-new snappy one-liners. No screenshots yet, but visit www.arushgames.com for more crumbs.

CDV ACCEPTS MISSION

Classic turn-based WWII strategy game *Combat Mission*, originally available only on the Net, has been picked up for re-release by publisher CDV. Developed by the hardcore war-gaming nuts at Big Time Software, the game caused some serious ripples when first released over 18 months ago, and the sequel *Barbarossa To Berlin* is due very soon. CDV is releasing the original game as *Combat Mission Gold*, a special two-disc compilation boasting loads of extra mods, missions, units and skins. It's due in stores mid-February for a self-assured £29.99.

ON HER MAJESTY'S GAMES SERVICE

Congratulations are in order for industry luminary Jez San, founder and CEO of legendary developer Argonaut, who recently became the first ever chap to be royally recognised for gamesy-type stuff. Jez, who also founded TIGA, the UK's Independent Game Developers Association, was rewarded for his efforts with an OBE for 'services to the computer game industry'. Expect to see other industry veterans pissing in all the right pockets in the lead-up to next year's Honours List.

SUDDENLY SIMON



Word has reached us that *Simon The Sorcerer 3D*, left languishing since a thorough PC ZONE shit-canning got it dropped from release schedules over a year ago, is finally to see the light of day. Developed by Headfirst Productions, the international publishing rights for the game have apparently been picked up by a US publisher, and it doesn't take a Hogwarts graduate to figure out where the renewed interest in this teenage wizard has come from. No word yet on a UK release date or any possible gameplay improvements.

Phantom mechas

Xbox yields 3D shooter *Phantom Crash* to the PC

Since when do arcadey 3D mecha games get made for the PC...? Originally announced as an Xbox title, action shooter *Phantom Crash* has recently been confirmed for PC release by publisher Phantagram, and may be early evidence of the Xbox actually benefiting PC owners with more diversity of games.

As is the Japanese way, the game is set in a shattered vision of future Tokyo, and proposes a popular urban deathmatch

game played between heavily toolled-up robots. The action can be viewed from the first or third person, and the phantom bit of the title refers to your ability to use *Predator*-esque optic camouflage to elude your opponents.

The game looks simply lovely in action, the unavoidably cool mecha designs complemented by sharp weapon effects and great animation. Think arcade classic *Virtual On*, but on a much bigger scale,

and don't think at all about plodding simulations like the *MechWarrior* series. In fact, think of it as a fast, arena-based FPS and you'll understand why this game belongs on the PC after all.

Genki • ETA Q3 2002 • www.phantagraminteractive.com/game_phantom.asp



Ⓜ The game is certainly no slouch in the looks department.



Ⓜ This guy's a whole lot quicker than he looks.



Ⓜ The first-person mode may prove less practical.

Away with the fairies

Action-adventure *Zanzarah* opens a gateway to a magical fairyland

Despite a couple of recent triumphs, the action-adventure genre remains poorly represented on the PC, so we're all too happy to report that *Zanzarah: The Hidden Portal*, the latest project from German outfit Funatics (of *Cultures* notoriety), has recently started to look half decent. The game is a

fantasy-themed third-person affair, in which you control an 18-year-old girl in the tender throes of budding womanhood. The premise is a kind of *Alice/Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe* scenario, wherein you possess the sole key to *Zanzarah*, a hidden world of goblins, fairies and magic, split from the human realm centuries ago. Once a paradise,

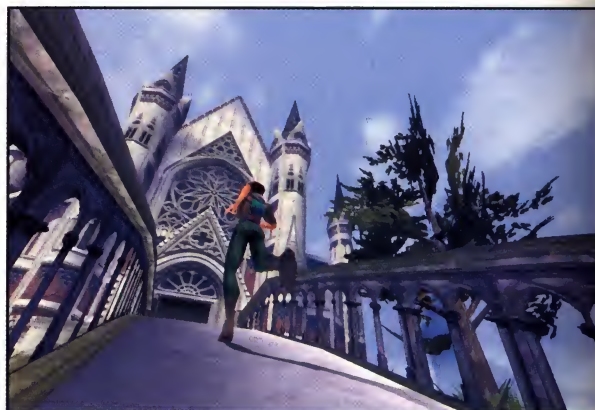
things have sadly all gone tits up – evil goblins are up to no good and the magical fairies are squabbling. Clearly, it's up to you to save matters and reunite the two realms, by exploring, fighting, and solving a few no doubt insultingly elementary puzzles. The developers have also hinted at some kind of *Pokémon*-esque

feature, in which you have to collect and train your vanquished fairy opponents and send them into battle. Which, while suggesting a younger target audience, at least indicates some willingness to depart from formula.

Funatics • ETA April • www.zanzarah.com



Ⓜ Will game designers ever tire of the lens flare effect?



Ⓜ Nothing gratuitous about the camera angles then...

Star-crossed

Korean RTS *Atrox* has *Starcraft* in its eyes

As anyone who's ever watched a mid '80s Brat Pack coming-of-age film will know, popularity isn't everything. And this is especially true of real-time strategy games whose popularity derives mainly from Germany. In fact, while we enjoy a good bratwurst as much as the next magazine (unless that mag happens to be *Razzle*), we'd have to say that being big in Germany is more stigma than endorsement when a game falls under our callous gaze. However, in the case of forthcoming RTS *Atrox* the matter is a little more clouded, as the game originates from Korea, and is clearly heavily influenced by one of their most popular diversions, classic RTS *Starcraft*.

Set in a far-flung sci-fi world, the game is a fairly standard mix of RTS ingredients, with resource management, a rudimentary character level-up system, and the obligatory three races to choose from. The plot is particularly impenetrable and probably irrelevant; online play supports up to eight players; the Germans loved it; what more can we say?

Joymax • ETA March • www.atrox.co.kr/atrox_eng/eng.htm



It's business as usual in the year 2334.

The horror...

Old-skool adventuring in *Midnight Nowhere*

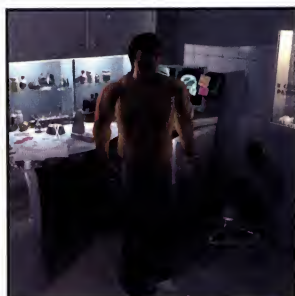
And so the adventure genre limps on, this time in the form of a horror-themed offering from deepest Russia.

Unfortunately, the thing with adventure games is that it's impossible to determine anything from looking at the screenshots and talking to the developers – the use of pre-rendered elements means the visuals never offend the eyeballs too much, and the 60-plus environments of *Midnight Nowhere* are clearly no exception. And since the real meat of the game lies in the storyline, script and puzzle mechanics, you can't really tell the complete crap from the potential classics.

The only consolation is that the developers Saturn+ are clearly big adventure buffs, as last we heard they were working on a nice-looking adventure outing entitled *Jazz And Faust* (yet to see the light of day). Then again, your character in *Midnight Nowhere* is suffering from amnesia, possibly our most despised overused plot device of the moment, and the serial killer plotline does little to inspire us either. Wait and see.

Saturn+ • ETA December

www.buka.com/games/midnight_nowhere



Not your average chiselled hero.



Did we mention it was scary?

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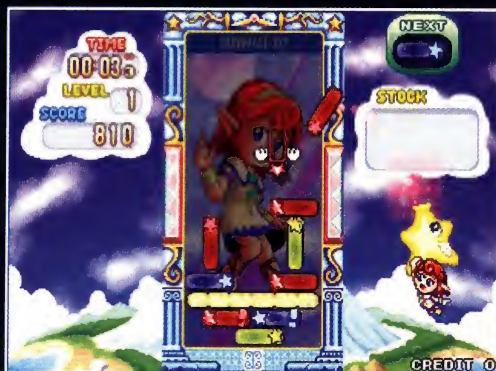
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EMULATION ZONE

Stuart Campbell heads out into the world and finds a place where no platform is out of reach

The world of emulation has been a legal battleground more or less since the concept was invented. Recent changes in law by various paranoid and clueless governments (including, incidentally, the same government which recently let an ex-*EastEnders* actor scupper a European anti-spam bill on the grounds that lots of companies would lose the chance to do legitimate business by inviting people to visit hardcore animal porn sites and take part in worthless pyramid schemes) have made it harder and harder to emulate without falling foul of the plod. However, even legal emulation has taken a battering from the big software corporations. Sony recently succeeded in killing the company behind Bleem!, the PlayStation emulator which ran on both PC and Dreamcast. Even though Bleem! had been successful in several court cases, Sony exerted so much pressure on retailers to not stock the company's products that they eventually gave up the ghost and closed down.

This would, of course, have been a serious blow



❶ Emu Zone has no idea how to play *Star Sweeper*. At all.

to gamers keen to play definitive home versions of some of the classic games of the PlayStation era, such as Namco's wondrous *Tekken* and *Ridge Racer*, if it hadn't been for the conveniently timed release of the first alpha version of the as yet unnamed Namco System 11 emulator, by the people who brought you astonishing 3D beat-'em-up *Emu The Impact*.

System 11 was the Namco arcade technology set based on PlayStation hardware, which ran a wide variety of coin-op games. These ranged from fighting and racing games like *Tekken* and *Ridge* to odd 2D puzzlers like *Star Sweeper* and scrolling shooters like *Xevious 3D-G*.

The fledgling emulator initially supports seven of the Sys11 games, including *Tekken 1* and *2*, *Xevious* and *Soul Edge*, the prequel to the hugely lauded Dreamcast fighter *Soul Calibur*. The emulator currently lacks sound due to the authors' lack of knowledge about the Namco 195 sound CPU, but now that the emu's existence has been revealed and publicly released, the chances are that development progress will be swift. Emulation Zone awaits the version supporting *Ridge Racer* with a keenness that borders on the indecent.

LINKS

❶ www.impactemu.com



❶ Graphical glitches reveal much about the minds of Namco's coders.



❶ You appear to be doing a good enough job of challenging yourself, dear.

VISUAL PINBALL TABLE OF THE MONTH

STAR WARS (DATA EAST)

The end of 2001 saw some fairly dramatic new releases of both Visual Pinball and Visual PinMAME, but the one development that was received with most applause was undoubtedly PinMAME's all-new audio support for a whole raft of 1990s Sega and Data East tables. The emulation of the BSM2000 sound chip brought a whole decade's worth of tables to deafening VP life, right up to 1999's *South Park*, but few tables were better than Data East's 1992 classic *Star Wars*. At the centre of a rich vein of fast and inventive games from the company around that time (including good and great movie-licensed games like *Lethal Weapon 3*, *Batman* and

Jurassic Park), *Star Wars* is actually a fairly basic table, but with a shrewdness of design that borders on genius. From the moment you fire the ball onto the playfield you seem to be under constant bombardment, right up until the moment when your game is over, approximately 12 seconds later. Unlike many later tables, which ensured even terrible players had a chance to admire their features, *Star Wars* makes you earn every flashing light and sampled soundbite in blood, and it's all the more enjoyable for it.

LINKS

❶ www.hipple.net/shivasite/vptables



❶ Play this whenever the *Episode 2* trailer makes you want to kill yourself.

WILL YOUR MATE BE STUNNINGLY GORGEOUS?



www.bwgame.com

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Introducing Creature Isle, the official add-on disk to Black & White™, the PC gaming hit of 2001. You'll have to woo, win and mate with a mystical Creature by passing a series of fearsome trials, including a test of fatherhood. The only question is, will she be a beauty or will she be a beast?



Find out who your Creature really is



CHARTS

Everything you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload. Plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what's hot and what's not



THE megastores TOP 10

XMAS	JAN	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
3	1	THE SIMS: HOT DATE	MAXIS	EA	71%
2	2	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: SEASON 01/02	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	92%
1	3	HARRY POTTER – PHILOSOPHER'S STONE	KNOWWONDER	EA	80%
RE	4	MAX PAYNE	REMEDY	TAKE 2	90%
NE	5	GHOST RECON	RED STORM	UBI SOFT	86%
4	6	RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN	GREY MATTER	ACTIVISION	88%
8	7	STAR WARS: GALACTIC BATTLEGROUNDS	LUCASARTS	ACTIVISION	84%
7	8	EMPIRE EARTH	STAINLESS STEEL STUDIOS	VU GAMES	80%
5	9	CIVILIZATION 3	FIRAXIS	INFOGRAMES	86%
6	10	ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2	MONOLITH	VU GAMES	93%

THE TOP 10

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3	4	RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN	GREY MATTER	ACTIVISION	88%
5	5	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
8	6	EMPIRE EARTH	STAINLESS STEEL	VU GAMES	80%
RE	7	MAX PAYNE	REMEDY	TAKE 2	90%
NE	8	THE SIMS PARTY PACK	MAXIS	EA	NA
7	9	CIVILIZATION 3	FIRAXIS	INFOGRAMES	86%
RE	10	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%

Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

- 1. The Sims: Hot Date** Banal, voyeuristic non-game, ideal for those who watch *Home Front*. Tie this with the opportunity to (at last) hit it off with the opposite (or same) sex and it's a winner.
- 2. CM 01/02** In-depth chronovore selling to those who love the series and footie fans who like selling the Neville brothers.
- 3. Harry Potter – Philosopher's Stone** Bought by parents for kids. Take the hype away and it'd sell 1,000 copies, tops.
- 4. Return To Castle Wolfenstein** Selling on the hype and the name. Decent FPS, heading for a fall when *MOH:AA* lands.
- 5. The Sims** See number one. The oddity that started it all.
- 6. Empire Earth** Eon-spanning *AoE* clone.
- 7. Max Payne** First step on the path to proper interactive movies?
- 8. The Sims Party Pack** Jeez.
- 9. Civilization III** Greatest strategy game of all time returns.
- 10. The Sims: Livin' It Up** I despair Morris, I really do.

csdaveuk

The Sims: Hot Date – well done games-buying public, now that gamers are no longer seen as nerdish social outcasts, you go and drag us back into it. I kind of know how Michael Corleone felt, trying to get out of the family business.

Righteous_Fury

With big sales of *The Sims*, *Empire Earth*, *Civ 3* and *CM*, it's good to see that the gamers of today are honing their management skills to be the industry leaders of tomorrow!

Fool

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART TRACK TOP 10

The Sims recently celebrated two continuous years in the UK sales charts. Impressive stuff, whatever your feelings about Will Wright's virtual phenomenon. What's more, there were an incredible five *Sims* titles in the top ten over the New Year period, spearheaded by the hot sim lovin' of *Hot Date*. A slightly more heart-warming stat is that the venerable *Half-Life* (currently languishing at 16) will also reach it's two-year chart run if it can hang on till mid-February. Both of these games have relied largely on player-developed add-ons for their success, something that other developers/publishers should take note of if they want their games to have any longevity – support your online community and it will support you.

Anthony Holden

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO

- 1 Who Wants To Be A Millionaire** (Eidos)
- 2 Champ Manager 00/01** (Eidos)
- 3 The Sims** (EA)
- 4 The Sims: Livin' It Up** (EA)
- 5 Red Alert 2** (EA)

2 YEARS AGO

- 1 Champ Manager 99/00** (Eidos)
- 2 AOE II: Age Of Kings** (Microsoft)
- 3 Planescape: Torment** (Interplay)
- 4 Quake III** (Activision)
- 5 Tomb Raider: Last Revelation** (Eidos)

5 YEARS AGO

- 1 C&C: Red Alert** (Virgin)
- 2 Diablo** (Sierra)
- 3 FIFA 97** (EA)
- 4 Tomb Raider** (Eidos)
- 5 Flight Sim 6** (Microsoft)

COMPETITION WIN THE ENTIRE VIRGIN TOP 10!

Once again, **PC ZONE** and **Virgin** have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer the following simple question:

QUESTION: There's a new area to explore in *The Sims: Hot Date*. What's it called?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with *all* the information requested, to the address below.

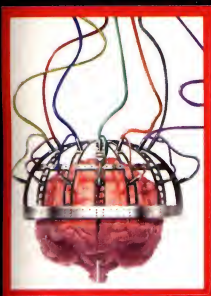
✪ Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).

✪ Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.

✪ Are you a current subscriber to **PC ZONE**?

Answers on a postcard to: **PC ZONE Chart Compo (CPCZ3A)**, Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: March 6 2002

✪ Terms and conditions: winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.



TECH HEAD

ATI shops out Radeon production, and some generously proportioned hard drives

HARDWIRED Tim Ponting

RADEON RUMPUS

Get a new RADEON – but not from ATI?

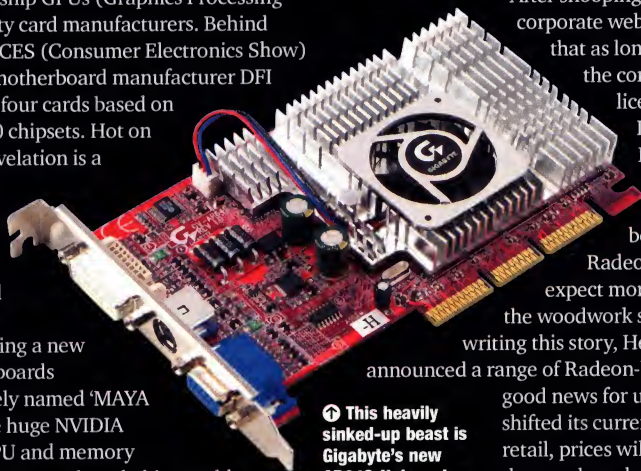
News has reached this techoid's ears about an interesting development on the video card front – Radeons, but not as we know them, oh no. Because these ones aren't in fact made by ATI.

After an extended period both designing chipsets and building and marketing its own boards, ATI is now selling its flagship GPUs (Graphics Processing Units) to third-party card manufacturers. Behind glass at the recent CES (Consumer Electronics Show) in Vegas, veteran motherboard manufacturer DFI showed a range of four cards based on the 7500 and 8500 chipsets. Hot on the heels of this revelation is a newsletter from Gigabyte, purveyors of all things motherboardy and generally good for techoids, announcing a new range of graphics boards somewhat obscurely named 'MAYA Serial'. These have huge NVIDIA Titanium-sized GPU and memory heatsinks, which suggests these babies could end up being favourites with overclockers around

the world. Indeed, Gigabyte gives a tantalising glimpse of its driver interface, called V-Tuner, which clearly shows dials for 'Fan Speed', 'Temperature', 'Core Clock' and 'Memory Clock'. Now why would you do that if you weren't going to give users the ability to tweak them? It'd be like installing a one-way mirror at a swinger's party.

After snooping around ATI's corporate website, it transpires that as long ago as last June, the company issued licences to Acer-DMS, DFI, FIC, Gigabyte, Lite-On Technology Corporation and USI to build boards based on

Radeon technology, so expect more to come out of the woodwork soon. On the day of writing this story, Hercules also announced a range of Radeon-based cards. This is good news for us, as once ATI has shifted its current stock through retail, prices will inevitably drop as the new boards start competing for market share.



⚡ This heavily sinked-up beast is Gigabyte's new AR64S-H, based on the Radeon 7500LE.

BIG JOBS

Shamelessly big hard drives from Western Digital

The hard drive maestros at Western Digital proudly claim on their homepage: 'Capacity for the Big Jobs'. It's to announce the jaw-slaveringly humungous WD1200BB, a hard drive with a capacity of 120Gb. Why they chose the suffix 'BB' as opposed to 'DD' is a mystery, the answer known only to boffins incapable even of undoing a front-loader.

The drive has three 40Gb storage platters, spinning at 7,200RPM. The drive interface is ATA100, suitable for connection to recent motherboards with built-in ATA100 EIDE controllers, though it can also be used with ATA-33 and 66 controllers too. Point your Browser at www.westerndigital.com for further info. As for how much it will set you back, we found it online in the UK for around £285, or £2.38 per Gb.

This is slightly pricier than our current recommended 60Gb Seagate drive, which weighs in at £2 per gig.

As the current ATA standards (to ATA-100) can only cope with hard drives up to 137Gb in capacity, this is about as fat a hard drive as your average gaming PC will swallow. Why? Because ATA-100 (based on the ATA5 specification) uses 28-bit access, only allowing up to 228 sectors to be addressed. To go beyond this limit, a new specification has to be agreed. Maxtor has led the way with adoption of a new ATA-133 (ATA6) specification, which increases the maximum data transfer speed to 133Mb/sec and introduces 48-bit sector addressing, which should in theory allow drive sizes up to 1,048,576Gb. Yes, you did read right. It

⚡ A 120Gb Western Digital Caviar drive. We recommend you leave the top on yours.



offers the meaty 160Gb D740X to kick off the arms race.

Unfortunately, you'll need either a new controller card or motherboard to use the drive; plus it's a widely held belief that the ATA-133 spec is merely a stepping stone before the adoption of the long-awaited Serial ATA standard, due to be supported in Intel motherboard chipsets in 2003. So gamers, stick with the 137Gb limit for now. After all, as Western Digital says, its drive can store '2,000 photos, 45 hours of music, five hours of digital video, 22 games and 35 software programs.' That's enough, isn't it?

FACTCANNON

★ We love small fish in big ponds. Nildram, one of the UK's most strident smaller ISPs, continues to buck trends by offering half-price USB-based ADSL installation, providing the order is placed before the end of March 2002. BT offered half-price installation to consumers for a while last year, and extended this deal to the wholesale price paid by other ISPs for their connections too – hence the lower prices we've seen across the board. But despite the fact that Nildram are now having to pay BT £150 for each new connection, they're only charging you, the punter, £75+VAT. Surf over to www.nildram.co.uk for more.



★ Netgear (www.netgear.com), suppliers of value-for-money network connectivity kit, make further inroads into the home user market with the launch of their new Powerline networking range. This allows you to plug devices into power sockets around your home and enjoy networking speeds of up to 14Mbps. And don't worry, you can still use your kettle while you're playing *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*. It uses the HomePlug 1.0 standard, and while it is currently designed for use with US-style 110V ring mains, we imagine that the same technology will be transplanted into UK homes before long, giving an alternative 'wireless' networking capability to radio-based LANs.

★ The Swiss are famous for watches, cheese and chocolate, plus in my case an unfeasibly tall blonde girl my mate John used to go out with. However, they are soon to be famous for cheap DVD-R: yes, the price is dropping. At the recent CES show in Vegas, Swiss company Vivastar unveiled its new range of DVD-R drives which it promises will sell in the US at \$100-\$200 less than drives currently shipping. Simultaneously, the company also promises cheaper blank media to record on. Watch for the arrival of Vivastar to a UK retailer near you soon. Check out www.vivastar.com for more information.



★ At the time of writing, we also hear of new drivers released for Radeon that see significant gains against NVIDIA's new Titanium range. We'd love to confirm this for you, but since ATI can't even give us a 7500 or 8500 review board (it's been on sale for months now), don't hold your breath.

★ Watch this space for a review soon of ODIN gamers' DDR RAM. From 3D card specialists 3D Power, it offers overclockers the ability to run their RAM at low latency CAS-2 300MHz DDR (with the bus clocked at 150MHz) as opposed to 266MHz. A little bit faster, a little bit more expensive. See www.3dpower.co.uk for details.

The Man who KNOWS

GATES IS DEAD?

Bill Gates has been killed. The Microsoft boss and world's richest man was shot twice in the head by a rifle-wielding assassin in Los Angeles. That's the premise for a new film, *Nothing So Strange*, which recently premiered at the Slamdance Festival in Utah. Taking the form of a 'mockumentary', the film purports to be an investigation of class, race and corrupt government institutions. Director Brian Flemming revealed: "The idea for *Nothing So Strange* came to me after I had been reading a lot about assassinations in the 1960s. I thought that an assassination today might be motivated by someone who wanted to start a class war. A natural target would be the richest man in the world." A spokesman for Gates murmured: "It's very disappointing that a movie-maker would do something like this." If it ever comes out here, expect there to be plenty of tickets available.

PC game *Operation Flashpoint* is being used to train soldiers to kill. Codemasters admitted that the United States Marine Corps is using a special combat training application based upon the chillingly realistic war simulation, and that other military organisations are looking into using it. Meanwhile, Labour MP James Plaskitt has revealed how he was hoodwinked into appearing in the game after visiting the Codemasters office during a tour of local businesses. The Right Honourable member explained: "When I arrived they were taking a lot of photographs to go with this new computer game and asked if they could take some of me. I was delighted to help as they are a thriving local company, but I had absolutely no idea that I would have a key role in this military video."

A high profile games industry PR person has been universally condemned after circulating an email that used the tragic deaths of three talented musicians to promote some tawdry game. The grossly insensitive message drew attention to the recent suicide of Feeder drummer, Jon Lee, as well as the death of EMF bassist Zak Foley and that of Big Country front man Stuart Adamson. The message then stated: "Life goes on and some even say rock 'n' roll never dies... It's no surprise that the recent rock suicides serve as an ironic twist leading up to the much hyped computer game release entitled *Rock Manager*." With the game's own publisher and developer almost tripping over each other in their scramble to distance themselves from the stunt, which they branded "shameless" and "unprofessional", and other industry notables declaring him a "sick bastard", the self-styled PR guru was forced to issue a retraction: "I sincerely apologise for any upset we may have caused you. It was not my intention to cause you any offence. My heartfelt sympathies go out to the three talented musicians and their families during this difficult time." Clearly at wit's end over his blunder, the offender did not stop there, issuing a plea for greater awareness of rock 'n' roll as a "delicate art form" and even defying all common sense by declaring EMF's *Unbelievable* a "classic rock/dance anthem".

3000AD could yet fill the gaps in the patchy *Battlecruiser Millennium*.



Battle improver

Battlecruiser Millennium's ambitions may yet be realised, little by little

PC ZONE has never been afraid to court controversy, especially when it comes to uncompromising review scores, and we put ourselves in the firing line again last issue with our review of Derek Smart's latest bug-riddled space opus *Battlecruiser Millennium*. While our fair-minded review score has since been vindicated by reader response, we'd nevertheless like to point out that Derek Smart's previous game was also a work-in-progress on initial release, but, to his credit, he and the team at 3000AD stuck with the game and supported it to the end. That was *Battlecruiser 3000AD*, released virtually unplayable in 1996, later 'finished', debugged and released free online, then as a graphically enhanced budget title in 1998. The point is, it was eventually quite decent, and the same could easily happen to *BCM*, though hopefully in a slightly shorter time span.

In fact, 3000AD has already released several minor patches for the game (available from the website below), shortly to be followed by a more substantial patch to include support for full 16-player multiplayer (perhaps up to 64 on official servers). On top of this it has promised two major expansions to its hardcore sim, both to appear later this year. The first, codenamed *XP1*, is to concentrate mainly on

expanding the list of units and their capabilities, as well as adding new scenarios, weapons, careers, planets and a massively detailed new city. However, it also promises to significantly improve the game's graphics and physics engines, and adds a list of other minor enhancements as long as your arm. Several of these address specific beefs we have with the gameplay, such as the inability to board, capture and control enemy vessels.

However, none of this compares with the ambition (some would say arrogance) of the second expansion, *XP2*, which promises to totally convert the game into a real-world military simulator on a global scale. All the existing units will be replaced with real-world alternatives, and the entire Earth modelled using accurate topological data.

Overweening or not, it's clear that the *BCM* universe is a constantly evolving one, and disappointed fans can rest assured that we'll be taking another look at the game when it's in a more presentable state. Of course a slightly piqued Derek has already sworn never to forgive us, so don't expect an exclusive look any time soon...

3000AD • ETA *XP1*: summer; *XP2*: Christmas • www.3000ad.com



XP1 will open up vast arenas of navigable space.



An F15 cockpit model destined for expansion 2.



❖ To be fair, this looks a lot better than most of the B-grade FPSs we see around here.



❖ And how can you help but admire Flameuar, the flame-breathing jaguar?

Crimes against nature

Inhuman experiments yield *Vivisector: Creatures Of Dr Moreau*

It just wouldn't be a complete Bulletin without images of at least one ropey-looking first-person shooter, so here's a quick look at *Vivisector: Creatures Of Dr Moreau*. It's the latest offering from Ukrainian developer Action Forms, previously responsible for the *Carnivores* series, and is inspired

by but not based on HG Wells' book of almost the same name. The basic premise is that you've been dropped on Dr Moreau's infamous island in the year 1987, where, as it transpires, the Doctor's cruel experiments on living creatures have been carried on long after his death. There you must do battle with a

variety of fierce genetically manipulated monstrosities such as Transpanther, the transparent panther, and Grenadilla, the grenade-launching ape. Not quite a rival to *Half-Life* then.

Action Forms • ETA TBC • www.vivisector.com

MISSING IN ACTION

These Games are MIA. We make like Chuck Norris and track them down



AGE OF MYTHOLOGY

Last we heard, Ensemble Studios' mythological follow-up to their obscenely successful *Age Of Empires* games was due this April. The game recently slipped another couple of trimesters, with an explanation seemingly non-forthcoming. We've done a bit of digging since then, and have discovered that, while the game is now essentially feature-complete, it's been delayed to ensure a thorough beta testing process. Which we suppose is good news for all you glass-half-full types, but to us it stinks of conspiracy.

Ensemble Studios • ETA September • www.ensemblestudios.com



BATTLE OF THE PLANETS

Many moons have passed since we brought you the news in issue 102 that Headfirst was working on a game based on the much-loved animated classic *Battle Of The Planets* (also known as *G-Force* and *Gatchaman* depending on where you grew up). We recently chatted with Headfirst's Andrew Brazier, and he let us in on the secret that *BOTP* is "kind of on the backburner at the moment" due to the demands of their other projects, *Call Of Cthulhu* and *Deadlands*. "Not much has progressed since we first announced the project," he confessed. No Fiery Phoenix just yet then.

Headfirst Productions • ETA TBC • www.headfirst.co.uk



GALLEON

We're starting to worry that putting this gorgeous action-adventure on our most wanted list for 2002 was a bit hasty, as the console versions have now slipped until September, with a PC version due at an unspecified later date. The departure of key team members is said to have contributed to the latest slippage of this embarrassingly delayed title, though the fact that it's set to lead on Nintendo's GameCube, which doesn't launch in Europe for some months, must surely be a factor. By the time it comes out, development will have stretched to about five years.

Confounding Factor • ETA Q3 • www.confounding-factor.com



LAN-lord Steve Randall helps you get the party started right

LAN parties – a great place to make connections. At my own Hallowed Ground LAN (www.hglan.co.uk) you'll generally only find men, with an average age in the high 20s, sometimes up 100 of them. But this is not always the case...

★ The guys at Kaos (www.kaos-lan.co.uk) attract not only women, but whole families. The Kaos LAN was the first I went to and was so good that I started my own LAN organisation. It's held in the Red Lion Hotel in Whittlesford, so beer and beds are no problem. The guys and girls who go are all friendly and Ar1an himself can still beat all-comers at *Total Annihilation*. They're having a get-together on February 23 and 24, so if you live near Cambridgeshire why not spend £25 on two days of fun.

★ I've not been to the LANs held by the good people of www.flintfrag.co.uk as it's in North Wales, but if you're in the area they organise an event every second Sunday at the Holiday Inn and at £10 it's a very reasonable event.

★ The Leicester Networking Games Club (www.gdbok.co.uk) also hold events frequently – monthly or more. To join them will cost you £10 a year and then just £5 an event. Their next two events are March 2 and 30 in a local Working Men's Club.

★ From February 16-17 there's the www.fragfestuk.com party in Gateshead NE8 – £25 could see you fragging with 99 other like-minded individuals.

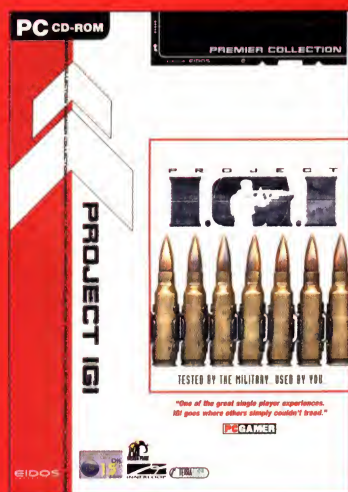
★ For Midlands folk, £37 will get you three days of gaming in Coventry with www.savagelan.com.

I don't think it matters which of these LAN parties you go to – you'll always find a helpful group of people willing to give you a hand. For all the fun that's had at such events, it always seems to be about community as much as anything else, so spread the love.

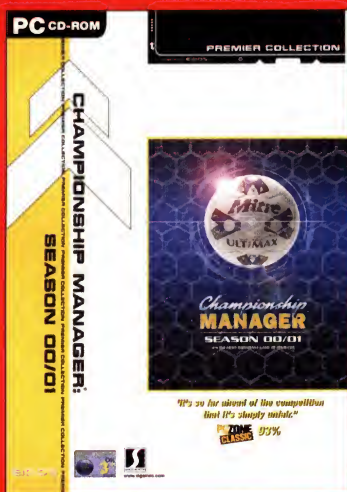
If you're holding a LAN party and would like it mentioned here, please let me know on stevie@arsenalfc.net with details of location, price, dates and times and prizes.

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not a shred of anthrax.

Christmas Card Competition

It seemed like a great idea at the time, but then don't they all?

We didn't get any Christmas cards last year and in a bid to brighten up our drab office and appear popular at the same time, we hit on the idea of a competition with a PC up for grabs to the sender of the most OTT Chrimbo card. It started with a trickle of standard-sized offerings with petty gripes inside ("My PC isn't fast enough and I haven't got any money so pleeeasee send me a new PC for Christmas") and then the dam burst and the big boys started to arrive.

At first we were taken by the enormity of the envelopes and every successive size increase was

greeted with a cry of "That's the winner", until we realised that it doesn't take much effort to nip down to Clintons, slap a tenner on the counter and ask the girl with ginger hair for the biggest card in the shop.

Then we got the clever 'pulling at the heartstrings' card. Huge and with a cheque inside written out to the tune of £200 to a 'children's charity', we briefly toyed with the idea of making it the winner and giving the kids something for Christmas, but then cards with chocolates inside turned up.

Pretty soon things were getting out of hand, with mawkish home-made childlike efforts packed with

ALSO-RANS

We loved the ten cards in the foreground here as well, and if you sent in one of them you can expect a game from the current Top 10 to drop through your letterbox in the next couple of weeks. Except for the one we've had to censor – you get a copy of *Erotica Island*.

goodies reducing the judging into an exercise in number-crunching. "That's great, but this one's got flashing lights, chocolates and a little speaker that plays tunes."

Drowning on a bed of, erm, bed-sized Christmas cards, we'd forgotten what it was all about. Proof was surrounding us, in the shape of small unopened envelopes, discarded because they obviously didn't contain anything edible, audible or spendable. Shamed we started opening them and found the winner. It might not be OTT in size or volume but it's pure genius.

WINNER LESTER THE RAT (DECEASED)

Ⓢ This is Lester, who died while trying to deliver us a Christmas card last year.

Ⓢ And this is the very envelope that Lester's been putrefying on.



Gary Somerville
Prize: the PC

A truly heart-wrenching tale to match the stomach-churning image on the front and the money shot when you finally realise what you're holding. One of our freelance ladies actually dropped it and ran for the toilets with her hand over her mouth, which makes you a genius Gary Somerville, you sick, sick man. One question before you get your PC – is that a real rat?

RUNNERS-UP

Joe Hind
Prize: the MP3 Player

What can we say? A truly dreadful and OTT offering that fought Lester all the way to a tie-break. We particularly liked the Michael Caine impersonator hiding behind one of the pop-up doors inside, but the clincher was the fact that the jingle was playing while it was being delivered and our postboys had to put up with a tinny rendition of 'Jingle Bells' for hours until we turned up late for work.

Barry Craig
Prize: the Digital Camera

A controversial choice for third place but with chocolates, music and flashing lights in one home-made package, Barry was always in with a shout. Can we just say that you nearly got disqualified for wishing everyone a Merry Christmas, from the editorial team, right down to the printers, our chairman and managing director. Barry, you might have a digital camera but you're still a sad bastard.





DUNGEON SIEGE

Rarely have we been quite as tingly over an RPG

We'll be straight with you. *Dungeon Siege* is an RPG in the grand fantasy tradition, replete with dwarves, leather jerkins and bubbling mugs of the finest mead – in other words all the things we regularly take the piss out of for being hopelessly overworked, and yet somehow we're as excited as a bunch of breathless schoolgirls riding bareback for the very first time. You see, *Dungeon Siege* is one of those games that only come along once every few years. Games that take an axe to their given genre, merrily hacking away all the soft, useless flab that's accumulated over the years of indolence and self-abuse, leaving only the barest bones of gameplay on which to build a leaner and faster gaming form.

We're talking hardcore, real-time, guts-out action in a stunning 3D world, with no ridiculous stats, no combat turns, no useless cut-scenes. It's not based on any archaic pen-and-paper RPG system patently not designed with computer gaming in mind, yet it's as hardcore as you want to make it. And what's more it's being developed by the chaps who brought us the superb *Total Annihilation*. How can it possibly fail?

Gas Powered Games • ETA April 2002 • www.gaspowered.com





MAILBOX



After a heavy Christmas and New Year, Dave Woods' detox regime went thus: no alcohol, no cigarettes, no answering readers' letters. Hence this month you have your letters answered by **Richie Shoemaker**

★ ANSWERED BY Richie Shoemaker

CONTACT INFO

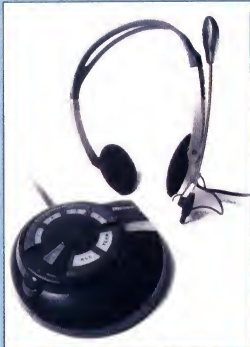
Write to us, and if your letter is selected as Letter Of The Month we'll send you a prize.

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CHAT FORUM If you've got something pressing to say, check out the 'lively' chat forum on our website. Point your browser at www.pczone.co.uk for further info.

SUPER PRIZES TO BE WON



PC ZONE is giving away not one, but two of these wonderful GameVoice contraptions from Microsoft to the writer of the Star Letter. If we don't consider any of the letters to be worthy we'll just keep them for ourselves. Using the GameVoice, you can communicate with other players online and give yourself a massive advantage over the Luddites who have to stop and type instructions. They're priced at £49.99 each and are worth every single penny.

GOLD MEDAL

I've just finished playing the demo of *Medal Of Honor* supplied with last month's PC ZONE and I have to say that I was so impressed I nearly messed myself. Everything about the game played like a dream – I was near gouging my eyes out in disbelief at the realism. I could comment on the graphics, sound, gameplay, AI and many other factors which are done so well, but instead I'm going to play it again, so tough.

Chris Thomas

Just like to say how happy I was with last month's cover discs. Not only did you give away the full version of *EverQuest* but also the single-player demo of *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault*. Without meaning to sound ungrateful, is there any chance of getting hold of the multiplayer demo? I have visited the official website and tried to download the massive 133Mb file, but on a 56K modem it takes forever.

Bill Smith

★ Everyone seems to agree that the *Medal Of Honor* demo is one of the best demos to be released in years – arguably the best since shareware *Doom* and *Duke Nukem 3D*. Thankfully the full game itself is just as good. Now if only other developers could create decent demos we would all be much happier.

Unfortunately we couldn't fit both demos on last month's CDs because they would have taken up too much space. If you haven't bought the game already however, you'll find the multiplayer demo on one of this month's CDs. Next issue we'll have no such problems as we'll release a DVD edition of PC ZONE every month, bringing you the best of

all the new releases, the latest patches and tons of new stuff that you won't get anywhere else.

IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM...

I write to you in a somewhat infuriated state of mind. I am sick and tired of having to listen to ignorant ten-year-olds going on about what games platform is the best. I know that I shouldn't really be sending this to a PC-based magazine, but I'd thought I should share my anguish.

Why should I care, you ask? Simple – gaming platforms should be rated by the games that are on them, not the actual platform, because it is useless when it's on its own. The games are the things that make a person play a specific console more. If they've got a crap game,

kids and forcing them to eat Texan bars and bags of Atomic Thunderbusters. It was childish I know, but people always brag about who's got the best console or computer and they always will. You are of course entirely right, but even if you use the argument that *Half-Life* is a great game that both PC and PS2 players can now enjoy, PS2 owners will probably either say their version is better (which it isn't), or that because of *Metal Gear Solid 2* theirs is the better machine. Best thing to do is just accept the fact that the Spectrum was better than the Commodore 64, the Atari ST was better than the Amiga, and the PC is better than all the consoles in the world, ever. Case closed.

“I've just finished playing the demo of *Medal Of Honor* and I was so impressed I nearly messed myself”

CHRIS THOMAS GETS A BIT TOO EXCITED

Obi-WAN

Point your browser in the way of [inferior gaming website] and check out the review of *Obi Wan*, the *Star Wars* Xbox game we will never see on PC. How sad we all were when it was canned for PC, and angry that it was resurrected for the Xbox console. But fear not, we aren't missing anything. The game received a poor 4.6 out

of 10. [Inferior gaming website] even sums up by saying: 'Something bad clearly happened when Obi-Wan was turned into an Xbox game.'

The great thing is we need not worry with games like *Unreal 2*, *Age Of Mythology*, *Mafia* and *GTA3* on the way. Sure we get plenty of poor games, but we also get some great ones.

Anyway, keep up the good work guys because if it wasn't for you we all would have bought *Red Faction*. Well, maybe not.

John Rodger

★ While we couldn't possibly comment on a game we've never played, it is a rather poor track record that LucasArts has in terms of its console-based *Star Wars* efforts. *Jedi Power Battles*, *Masters Of Teras Kasi*, *Star Wars: Demolition* and *Super Bombad Racing* are the worst culprits, none of which we've had to endure. But there have been some fairly good console efforts that we've been able to enjoy on PC; *Episode I Racer* was OK, *Rogue Squadron* was pretty good and we have high hopes that GameCube's *Rogue Leader* might make the move to PC soon. We don't get it all our own way all the time – remember *Star Wars: Supremacy*, *Rebel Assault* and *Force Commander*? Thankfully, it seems

LucasArts has turned the corner on PC at least – *Jedi Knight II*, *Knights Of The Old Republic* and *Star Wars Galaxies* all look amazing.

Red Faction wasn't that bad, but again it's about the best FPS on console, which isn't saying much.

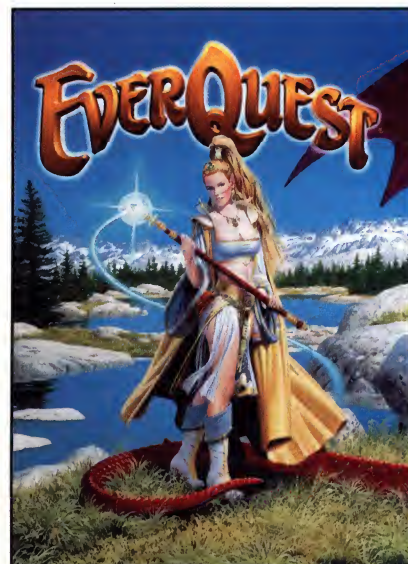
TURNED FROM THE DARK SIDE

I am a new reader to your mag after defecting from, er... shall we say another





Obi-Wan on Xbox. We may have had a lucky escape there.



You've got the original, where are the add-ons?

popular PC mag. With interest I turned to the Emulation section, with a nostalgic sigh.

I promptly checked out the Net and discovered emulators for the Spectrum 48k and as I was playing *Manic Miner* (among others), I suddenly remembered a video disc arcade game I used to play in my youth. It was a cartoon-type game, with a young feeble knight who goes off to rescue a princess, with constant hassle from a dragon. I cannot remember the name of the game, but I do remember pouring 10p pieces into it all day long. In your infinite wisdom, do you know if there is an emulator and the game on the Web I could download? If indeed you can even remember the name of the game.

A sad old PC gamer
from Margate

Welcome to the Rebel Alliance. We always welcome new readers, especially those previously brainwashed by the propaganda of the Evil Empire. But anyway, *Dragon's Lair* is the game you're after I believe, and you may be pleased to know that its creator Don Bluth is working on a new version that should be out this year. If you're looking for an emulator to play the original game then pay a visit to www.classicgaming.com. Alternatively, you could pop down your local games emporium and buy the original game which was released about a year ago for DVD players (PS2- and PC-DVD-compatible). My

advice is to just sit back and remember it as it was, otherwise you may be a little disappointed.

MORE EVERQUEST

I have been a subscriber to your magazine for about three years now (and buying it off the shelf before then) and would like to start off by saying how great it is. It's funny and enjoyable to read as well as being very informative about products and PC news. And with the great cover CDs

only one that's installed *EverQuest* from your CD and seen what I've been missing out on, but the problem is I can't seem to find a UK outlet that can supply the two other expansions. Could you please maybe take some time out to source these products for me so we (or at least I) can get the full benefits of what seems a fantastic game.

S Macro

Ubi Soft, who publish the *EverQuest* series in the UK, released a Special Edition a

offer is to shop around and pretend it's a quest...

THICKIE'S GUIDE TO...

When I first took a monthly interest in *PC ZONE* I was drawn to the 'How To' features, especially on how to create levels for games like *Unreal Tournament*. I haven't seen any in your magazine for a while now though, nothing that jumped out anyway... So if I could make a suggestion, do more! It was an easy-to-follow, no-bullshit guide that got my thick head around mapping – but if you do bring it back, do it on a newer game. I would probably go out and buy it if it was good.

Scott

Have you been listening in to our top secret

meetings? If you have you'd know that we are bringing back our 'How To...' features, and this time they really will be aimed at thickies like you, since Paul Presley will be writing them as part of our new Extended Play section. Seeing as he's a bit of a divvy himself, it might take him a while to reach the technical proficiency required for building *Unreal 2* levels, so bear with him while he starts off small. Starting off small

will also be my own little pet project, which again I'll let you in on next issue – but then you probably heard all about that one as well.

"I am sick and tired of having to listen to ignorant ten-year-olds going on about which games platform is the best"

ADAM HALL HAS HEARD IT ALL BEFORE

what more could I ask for? Now I've dispensed with the sucking up I'll get to the point.

With the last issue you had a big section of the mag and a whole CD dedicated to *EverQuest*. When this game first came out, I was only considering going online. By the time I did, the game seemed old and I didn't consider purchasing it (big mistake). But now after installing the full game from your cover CD and reading your strategy guide along with the review for the latest expansion – *Shadows Of Luclin* – I'm hooked!

But I need your help. From talking to people playing in the game and seeing them listed as previous expansions in your *Shadows Of Luclin* review, I see there are two other expansions for the game – *Scars Of Velious* and *Ruins Of Kunark*. I'm sure I'm not the

few months back with both add-ons, but most places seem to have sold out and it would be a case of finding a shop with a copy left. We had a bit more luck online: Amazon is selling *Velious* for £13 for example, but we couldn't find *Kunark* anywhere. The last resort is to buy from the US. Sony (<https://store.station.sony.com>) are selling the packs for \$14.99 each, but it will cost you \$60 for postage and you may even get extra charges if the Post Office intercept the package. We phoned Ubi Soft back to explain the situation and they did say that a budget release for *Kunark* was on the cards but there's no release date set as yet. The best advice we can

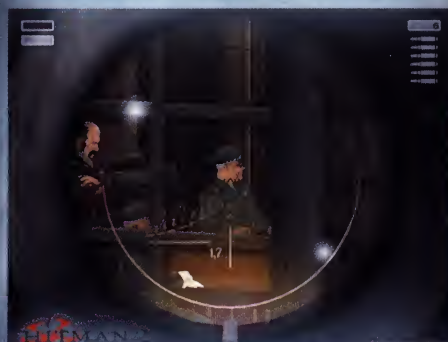
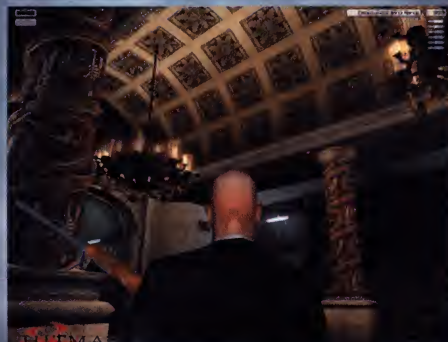




Death is his business. And business is good.

Enter the mind of a genetically-engineered assassin-for-hire, whose deadly efficiency is now needed more than ever. Lured back into a global ring of deception by a twisted Russian crime boss, he must kill not only to make a living, but to continue living. This time it's not just business. It's personal.

MARCH 2002



HITMAN 2™

SILENT ASSASSIN

www.hitman2.com

Trust is hard to come by...

Mark Hill sticks a hot wire in some blood samples. No special reason, he's just weird that way

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Computer Artworks
PUBLISHER Vivendi
WEBSITE www.thethinggame.com
OUT Summer

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Based on the cult horror by John Carpenter
- ★ Team-based action/adventure with real emotions
- ★ Recreates the paranoia of the film
- ★ Could be the most terrifying game since *System Shock 2*

CV

COMPUTER
ARTWORKS

COMPUTER ARTWORKS

Although they've been around for nearly nine years now, they only have one game to their name. Not that they haven't been busy, mind you.

1996 *Organic Art*—An impressive software package that allows you to create weird 3D shapes and sold extremely well

2000 *Evdya*—An ambitious and incredible-looking shooter that allows you to mutate your characters' DNA. Disappointing gameplay-wise, but some of its genes will live on in...

2002 *The Thing*—Being worked on for PC, PS2, and Xbox, this could really land Computer Artworks in the big time



Two men lie in the snow, sharing a bottle of Scotch and a look of complete exhaustion in the glacial night. Their bodies are warmed and illuminated by the fires that are consuming their Antarctic base, flames dancing between the black sky and the powdery white ground. Soon the fires will go out and both men will freeze to death. Compared to the fate of their comrades, this seems like a good way to go.

"Well, what do we do?" asks Childs, still unsure whether the man next to him is a human being at all.

MacReady pauses for a few seconds before answering, the frost on his beard turning his face into a hollow cave. "Why don't we just wait here for a little while," he says, "See what happens."

So ends John Carpenter's *The Thing*, leading to much speculation among the cult following the film has amassed over the years.

Did either of the characters survive? Was one of them *The Thing*? Will the creature take over the world?

While Computer Artworks' game promises to answer some if not all of these questions, they're not about to let us in on the secrets just yet. What we can tell you is that the game is billed as a sequel of sorts rather than an adaptation or loose

reworking, and that the ice block found in the Norwegian base will be making a reappearance. The action takes place some months after the scene described above, when a military squad lead by your character, Blake, arrives at the base to investigate why radio contact has been lost. As you can imagine, they don't find a ski resort where they can snowboard and get pissed for three weeks. That would be another kind of game entirely. What they do find is a creature from another planet ready to rearrange their internal organs into amusing shapes and spread paranoia among every single one of them.

don't think many licences were used, unless they were from action films that were very recent," explains Chris. "Due to the continual growth of the industry and demand for new games I think publishers are starting to look more at their portfolio of licences for inspiration. Also I think the quality of licensed products has been raised as consumers demand good games - not just big names." And Universal Studios certainly think they can deliver a good game.

"Universal approached us based on the work Computer Artworks had done with both *Organic Art* and *Evolva* and we jumped at the chance to work on the title. The fact that it is 20 years old doesn't really come into it. It is a classic horror movie that still manages to scare and shock."

Given the kind of horrors that have taken place in the US base before you get there, you should experience the same kind of creepy atmosphere that permeated *System Shock 2*. In that Looking Glass classic you continually stumbled upon evidence of dreadful events if you remember, with mutilated bodies and ghostly messages waiting round every corner. *The Thing* looks like striving for the same balance between suspense and all-out horror. "The player will be kept guessing all the way through," says Chris, "and will be seeing some pretty gruesome stuff. Don't take anything for granted."

But there is one huge difference between *SS2* and *The Thing*. Where in *System Shock* you are completely alone throughout the whole ordeal, *The Thing* is as much about interaction with other people as it is about

“Did either of the characters survive? Was one of them *The Thing*? Will the creature take over the world?”

anything else. The film, like the original *Alien*, builds the psychological tension through the exchanges and relationships between the trapped men. The extreme situation brings out the worst in some, the best in others, but there is always an underlying current of distrust and paranoia. The way the game aims to translate this is surely one of its most exciting features.

TRUST AND FEAR

The team you lead into the base isn't made up of lifeless back-up bodies you can switch to if you die, or bots that are pretty handy with a weapon but score low in the personality stakes. This time round each character in your team has a personality and an attitude that will change depending on your actions. Since we're not talking about creating sentient beings just yet, the most important features of their mental configuration are fear and trust, the most basic emotions.

IN ANTARCTICA EVERYONE CAN HEAR YOU SCREAM

The film was released 20 years ago, but according to senior producer Chris Hadley and technical director Mark Atkinson, there's a good reason why it should be made now. "Up until a short time ago I





This is no time to be thinking of your stomach.



Fire is the only way to destroy the evidence.

"Team-based games have been around for a while but in most cases the team members end up being drone-like wingmen that simply help you in combat," offers Chris. "Given the great sense of tension and suspense in the film, we wanted the player to have to work to get the best out of their team members. The idea is that the NPCs have trust and fear. Trust is based on the player's actions (anything from how long they leave an NPC alone to how they perform in battle) and on the NPC's perception of how likely it is that the player is infected. Fear is based on the environment and possible enemies. At the extreme, an NPC that loses all trust in you may open fire on you, seeing you as a definite enemy. An NPC that has massive levels of fear may end up cowering in a corner and refusing to move or help you."

Can you imagine that? Trying to operate in the most difficult of environments while keeping your team sane and convincing them at all times that you haven't been taken over by the creature? This should make you get



It's up to you to get the most out of the NPCs.

YOU GOTTA BE F****IN' KIDDIN'

Question: who goes there? Answer: a disgusting monstrosity

We've talked a lot about your team-mates, but it wouldn't be much of a horror game if there weren't some twisted creatures to fight you and rip your arms off, would it?

Creating a being who can simulate any other life form and who has the baggage of dozens of shapes assimilated on alien planets is no easy task. CA wants to keep *The Thing's* behaviour a surprise, but they will say that whilst undetected *The Things* will appear to act as normal people (as in the film). "But once forced to burst out they will become incredibly intimidating foes, hellbent on survival and infecting others." There seem to be three different forms that *The Thing* takes when you confront it. One is the arachnid-like head with legs from perhaps the most

famous scene in the film, and which should act not totally unlike the face-huggers in *Half-Life*. Another is a human-like figure misshapen by protruding limbs and all sorts of vile disfigurements. The third is the form it took in the picture when it was inside the dog pen and again towards the end. There it's just an amorphous mass of tissue, bone and blood, with tentacles whipping all over the place, eyes peering from the most unlikely places and bits and pieces of dogs and other creatures exploding from its sides. Not a pretty sight then.

As you can see from the screenshots, they've been rendered gloriously. It's not a coincidence that CA is known for pushing the graphical capabilities of modern machines.



Now that's just disgusting.

Ouch. That smarts.



THE GENUINE THING

Despite being called a remake, Carpenter's film is much truer to the source material

Considering how adored it is today, it seems strange to think *The Thing* was shunned by audiences when it hit the cinema screens in 1982. We imagine that an entirely different kind of alien, going by the name of ET, might have had something to do with it. *The Thing* was released two weeks after Spielberg's blockbuster. Based on the same short story ('Who Goes There?' by John W Campbell) that inspired the 1950s version by legendary Howard Hawks, it's still a magnificent piece of horror cinema, even if it was criticised at the time for featuring no women and being too gory. It happened to come out just as AIDS was becoming part of our lexicon, blood tests and paranoia belonging to fact as well as fiction. It also features a character called Blair who goes mad when he realises he can't save the world, and is eventually revealed as an abomination from another planet. Carpenter's and Kurt Russell's careers have been downhill ever since (by the way, they can be heard on the DVD commentary claiming that *Asteroids* is their favourite game). Carpenter made some early stunners (*The Fog*, *Halloween*, *Assault on Precinct 13*) but has produced nothing but drivel lately (*Vampires*, *Ghosts of Mars*). Russell, meanwhile, went on to rubbish like *Overboard* and *Soldier*. To think he once played Elvis in a TV film directed by, er... John Carpenter. Monstrous indeed.



"It's just a shadow you great big baby."

more involved yourself, having to assume leadership of feeling, thinking characters. And, of course, you can't remove fear and trust from your own equation. It's quite likely you'll be leaving large brown stains on your chair every time you meet a creature, and that you'll begin to distrust every one of the soldiers under your command. Would you put your life in the hands of someone who could have tentacles bursting out of their arse?

CLEVER SODS

When the PlayStation 2 arrived over a year ago with its much trumpeted

Emotion Chip, everyone was lead to believe a new dawn of gaming was about to begin, where feelings would actually become part of the gameplay. *The Thing* might not revolutionise the industry just yet, but Computer Artworks is certain it's a step in the right direction: "Perhaps we will be able to make players start thinking differently, and approaching their game experience in a less isolated way," says Chris. "Even when playing a game on your own, this new mechanic ensures that you consider the other team members. Only through co-operation can you be successful."





The visuals are almost as good as the new DVD release.



For those of you wondering what had happened to Chris Anderson.



Violent? Bloody? Nah.



Concept art for the Antarctic base.

To make the whole premise work though, CA needs to produce some pretty nifty AI, good enough to simulate believable human behaviour and plunge right into the action as if you were really there. It also needs to be dynamic, responding to real-time situations, which must also mean that

set path, the player's experience of how they move along that path changes, based on how they treat their team-mates and how effective they are at combat. The AI driving the NPCs is pretty complex. They are capable of taking minor actions on their own, but we wanted to limit this to ensure that

“Would you put your life in the hands of someone who could have tentacles bursting out their arse?”

things could turn out differently each time you play. Couldn't they?

“The characters use both dynamic AI and scripts” agrees Chris. “Some scenes will be the same, but there is a lot of scope for things to happen differently based on what the player does. Although the game does follow a

the player still feels in control of what is going on. The NPCs can become infected during any fight but as in the film they do not reveal this unless forced to, so the player is kept in a continual guessing game that gets more intense as the need for help from the team increases.”

Q&A

CHRIS HADLEY



He says he's the senior producer at Computer Artworks. But how do we know it's him?

PCZ How many times have you watched the film?

CHRIS To be honest I've lost count, but I'm still not bored of it.

PCZ Have you listened to Carpenter's DVD commentary for tips?

CHRIS Not really – the film itself doesn't really need any explanation when you've pored over every detail as much as we have (but I may go and have a listen anyway now that you mention it!).

PCZ Any favourite scenes?

CHRIS When Windows, the radio operator, buys the farm and then gets flamed before the creature even has the chance to burst out. (Err... in case you don't know, 'buying the farm' is an American expression meaning 'to die', and dates back to WWII, when the insurance from dead GIs would allow their parents to pay off their mortgage – Ed.)

PCZ Did you pick anything up from the original black-and-white movie?

CHRIS To be honest, no. John Carpenter's interpretation was much truer (in my opinion) to the original short story than the 1952 version, so we based our research on that. We preferred it since it focuses more on suspense and tension.

PCZ Can you remember the first game you ever played, or the first one that made you want to get into games?

CHRIS The first game I ever played was *Space Invaders*, the arcade machine, or *Defender* on the BBC. Ah, happy days. The first one that made me want to get into games was *Dragons Lair* on the Laser Disk arcade machine. Ah, expensive days!

PCZ What's your favourite game of all time and which one are you most looking forward to?

CHRIS Easy. *The Thing* and *The Thing 2*.

The Thing's little brother.

Three men talking, yesterday. But which one's the Thing?

But what does this team we keep going on about comprise of? Well, there are three distinct types of characters: soldiers (who are essential for battles and have the highest trust and lowest fear levels. Should they crack, however, they can turn into deadly foes); engineers (you need them to operate computers, get generators working, repair equipment and remove obstacles – on the bad side, they scare easily and suspect everyone) and medics (not only do they heal you, they can help to bring down fear levels in the team).

ALONE IN THE COLD

But while they are extremely useful, CA has gone out of its way to let you have some independence too. "Certain NPCs are needed at set points in the game so you can't go through the game totally alone," says Chris. "However, once an NPC has served their purpose

the player is perfectly able to dispense with their services in whatever fashion they choose, though this will definitely make the game more difficult."

Giving orders can be done in two ways. If you're close enough to a person you can signal what you want (eg need more ammo, fix this) with a single button, presumably in a more sophisticated version of clicking on a *Half-Life* security guard or scientist. The other way is with the command interface, which can be used to give orders to whole groups and will hopefully be as effortless and graceful as the one in *SWAT 3*.

Oh, and in case you're wondering, you will be able to do blood tests to check up on your personnel, although it will be a lot quicker and easier to do than it was in the film.

The gameplay itself will provide equal doses of action (for which you are equipped with machine guns,

grenade launchers, flame throwers and so on) and puzzles. Though you won't have the luxury of thinking much about them. "Rather than let the atmosphere drop while the player searches around for items or clues, the game keeps the pace up even during puzzle situations," says Chris. "Expect to be under a fair amount of pressure and you'd better hope your team are feeling co-operative or you could find yourself in a lot of trouble."

You also have to contend with changing weather, which can affect when you can go outside and also damage your health. All of which should ensure that this is one of the highlights of the year, providing CA can provide the gameplay to match their brilliant ideas. We'll be the first to tell you how it turns out. And you know you can trust us. Or can you? **PCZ**



Here comes Johnny... SOLDIER OF FORTUNE 2: DOUBLE HELIX

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Raven Software
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE www.ravensoft.com
OUT April 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Ultra violent
- ★ Based on the knowledge of ex-soldier of fortune John Mullins
- ★ Highly realistic weapons
- ★ Enhanced *QIII Arena* technology
- ★ Boasts unique Random Map Generator for multiplayer game



Keith Pullin goes to Los Angeles to meet an awfully big Marine

Has anyone noticed that in press conferences the United States' General Tommy Franks refers to al-Qaeda terrorists as 'The Bad Guys'? Why not just use the term terrorist? Maybe it's a subtle reminder to us civilians that these people are bad because, after all, it's easy to forget that flying passenger jets into skyscrapers and thereby killing thousands of innocent people in the process is actually wrong.

Meanwhile, President George W Bush is trying to convince the world that this is a war of good against evil. Get a grip George – it's not bloody *Lord Of The Rings*. There is no good and there is no evil. OK, the acts of terrorism we all witnessed last September were completely deplorable and totally unjustifiable, but this

current situation is also partly to do with the fact that two totally different cultures have little or absolutely no understanding of each other.

CULTURE CLUB

It may be crass to draw comparisons, but videogaming presents a similar cultural divide. On one side you've got those who enjoy gaming and the escapism it offers, and on the other

And so we come to the evil FPS known as *Soldier Of Fortune 2*. When it's finished it will be so difficult to differentiate between the game and real life that people will run out their homes and shoot each other in the head the moment they've finished playing it.

John Mullins, an ex-Green Beret with 20 years service to his name, and whose exploits the game is loosely

“A heavily protected Russian soldier needs a lot of lead inside him before exploding in a blizzard of gore”

side there are those who rarely play or understand them yet are quick to cite them as the reasons behind mass shootings and general moral decay. If only it were that simple. A game, like a film or even a book, may trigger an action in an already disturbed mind, but it's certainly not the cause.

based upon, believes realism is where *Soldier of Fortune 2* wins out over its contemporaries: “We've tried to keep it as realistic as possible. You're not going to slap around a 50-calibre machine-gun – not unless you're Arnold Schwarzenegger. There's none of that nonsense. All the weapons are



By far the most impressive level visually is the Colombian jungle.



There are 14 real-world weapons and ten grenades.

real. There aren't any proton guns – or whatever the hell it was in the first game. The weapons in the game are all based on guns that are in use or you would encounter on a mission – AK 47s, AK74s, RPG 7s and various other weapons that the enemy might have.”

Alas, if you find it difficult to get hold of these particular guns to embark upon your real-life killing spree, you'll find it nigh-on impossible getting your hands on *SOF2*'s star weapon, the OICW, or Objective Infantry Combat Weapon. For those of you who aren't *Guns&Ammo* subscribers, this real-life prototype weapon has, according to Mr Mullins, been in development for 15 years but is not yet being used by the US military

because of technical problems. It's easy to see why. The OICW carries an onboard computer that actually identifies potential threats by flashing up a warning message in the sight saying 'hostile', or in the case of General Franks, 'bad guy'.

JORDAN'S DIGITAL THRILLS

Whereas John came in relatively late on during the development of the original *Soldier Of Fortune* and didn't get to influence design as much as he would have liked, the situation for *SOF2* has been different. “I've been on this project from the start and I helped develop the scenario. I gave some ideas of real world places that I've been and places that we have



Different views such as this heat-seeking mode means no one can escape Mullins' might.

operated, what they were like and what kind of things we faced.”

The result, rather surprisingly then, is an all-action thriller where you must destroy a group of bio-terrorists before they can unleash a deadly virus and annihilate humanity as we know it. The James Bond-esque race against time encompasses ten exotic

locations including Colombia, Prague, Kamchatka, Hong Kong and Jordan.

Jordan? Exotic? We asked if she ever got her wobblers out at all, but nobody seemed to understand,

least of all John who slipped into one of his 1,000-yard stares.

Still, the Colombia levels offered their fair share of titillation with amazing jungle landscapes (designed using the TORR terrain system) featuring fantastic swaying grass and superb foliage that you can use as cover. There are also some snazzy

QIII Arena-powered

UPDATE



Play *SOF2* for too long and you'll feel the urge to fire a rocket-launcher through your neighbour's bedroom window.





① Enemy AI is looking good and boasts different mannerisms depending on the character.



② Rudimentary puzzles ensure gameplay isn't just a case of annihilating all and sundry.

CV



RAVEN SOFTWARE

Raven has been around for ten years now and has an enviable list of achievements to its name.

2002 As well as *SOF2*, Raven has also managed to squeeze in *Jedi Knight 2* and it's working on *Quake IV* of course.

2001 *Elite Force* – Top quality FPS based on *QIII* Arena technology and *Star Trek Voyager* licence.

1999 *Soldier Of Fortune* – Brutal FPS with big body count but average gameplay.

1998 *Heretic II* – Elven sequel using the *Quake II* engine in a third-person perspective. Looked great, played average.

1997 *HeXen II* – *Quake*-powered FPS sequel. Still worth a bash today.

1997 *Take No Prisoners* – Top-down action developed concurrently with *MageSlayer* and one of the first games to take advantage of 3D hardware acceleration.

1997 *MageSlayer* – Top-down arcade game with 16-player multiplayer mode.

1996 *NecroDome* – Allowed players to work together in combat with one player serving as the driver while the other fired the vehicle's weapons.

1995 *HeXen* – Based on the *Doom* engine, the massively popular *HeXen* took only eight months to develop.

1995 *Heretic* – Award winning FPS about the adventures of an angry elf.

1994 *CyClones* – Superb cybernetic FPS based on Raven's in-house STEAM engine.

1993 *ShadowCaster* – Pseudo RPG/FPS utilising a hybrid of *Id* Software's *Wolfenstein 3D* engine.

1992 *Black Crypt* – Released on the Amiga it was Raven's first ever game.

environmental effects like snow and rain, and some very authentic-looking mist and fog. The variety of enemies is equally diverse, ranging from coke-addled drug lords to terrorists (sorry, 'bad guys'), as well as America's erstwhile foe, the Russian soldier.

TEE-SHIRT TERRORISM

It was also interesting to see that during our playtest each enemy exhibited not only different levels of AI (the LICH system apparently), but different grades of strength and endurance too. It doesn't take much to frag a jeans and tee-shirt clad terrorist, whereas a heavily protected Russian soldier needs a lot of lead inside him before exploding in a blizzard of gore.

Obviously the amount of damage your enemies take is also dependent on the weapon used. Sounding more

launcher, which is the primary weapon of all Special Operations troops from the United States today. It's the weapon they're using in Afghanistan – and it's a very, very good little weapon. It fires a 5.56mm cartridge, which is good up to about 350 meters – devastating in its effects. You hit somebody in the middle of the chest and they're going down."

Quite.

145 MILLION LEVELS

One of the features that the game's developer Raven is particularly proud of is the Random Mission Generator, or RMG if you're into acronyms (and Raven clearly is, what with its LICHs and its TORRs). Basically, you decide what type of terrain you want, what the weather should be, how many buildings you want and a whole

Though it may not be as precise as creating a level on an editor, it does mean that nobody can gain advantage over other players by learning a map before a match. In fact, according to Raven there are a total of 145 million different maps available using this technique. While not infinite, that's still a fair few to keep you occupied and the chances of the same one coming up twice are about the same as winning the lottery.

However, the downside appears to be that you can't actually save the map if you create a particularly good one. Why Raven can't do this is unclear, but we got the impression that it's an issue that will be remedied in the future.

Still, if it all sounds too much for you, you can always frag your way through the six

“Frag your way through the six standard multiplayer maps, including the developers' office”

and more like the drill instructor from *Full Metal Jacket*, John was happy to insist this: “The game's main weapon is the M4 carbine with the M2 grenade

host of other options. The generator then throws down what you asked for and you get to play a multiplayer game on that level.

SENSITIVE TYPES

Hey Mr Taliban, hand over Bin Laden

With the game and film industries going through a 'responsible' phase due to the events of last September, the timing of *SOF2*'s release couldn't be more interesting. As Project Administrator Kenn Hoekstra revealed while we headed for the firing range in Inglewood to loose off a few rounds at some Osama Bin Laden effigies, they didn't really have to make any changes. “We had most of the design in place already. One piece of dialogue was altered just

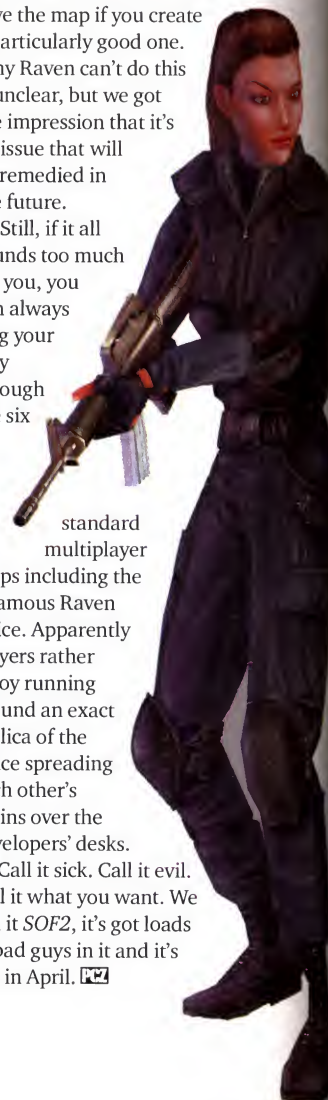
to be sensitive to changing times and that's about it.”

But surely they must have considered chucking in a couple of extra bonus missions where you could infiltrate Afghanistan and hunt down Osama Bin Laden and some al-Qaeda terrorists? “There were a few suggestions like that but we didn't think our legal department would like it. We thought it would probably be a bad idea.”

They were probably right.

standard multiplayer maps including the infamous Raven office. Apparently players rather enjoy running around an exact replica of the office spreading each other's brains over the developers' desks.

Call it sick. Call it evil. Call it what you want. We call it *SOF2*, it's got loads of bad guys in it and it's out in April. [EW]



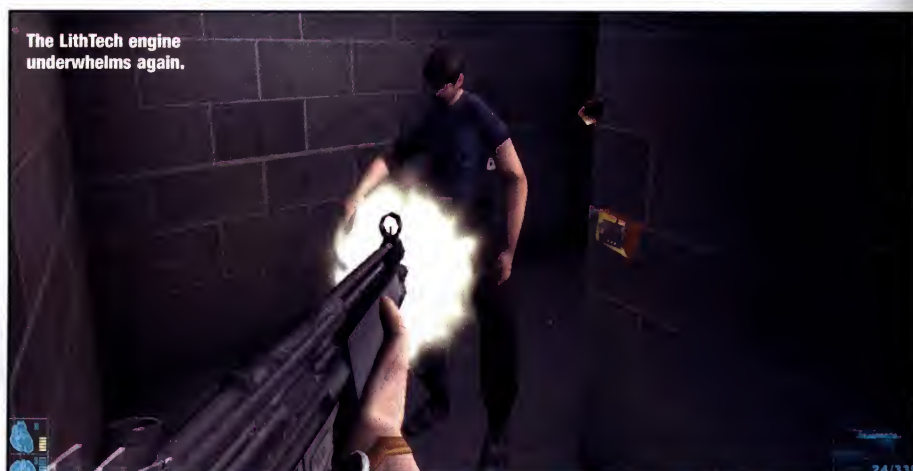
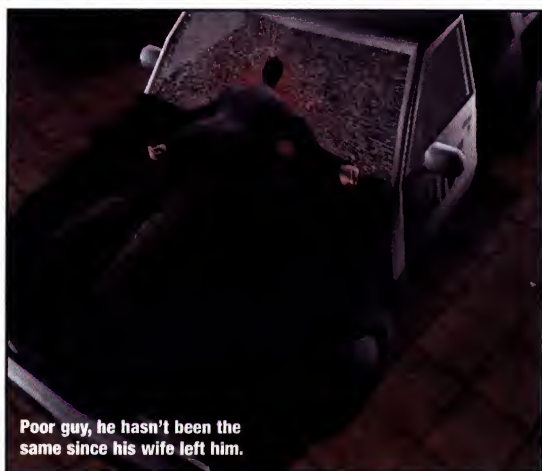
**YOUR REINFORCEMENTS ARE
IN DANGER.**



**DO YOU GO
TO THEIR AID
OR CONTINUE WITH
THE MISSION
ALONE?**

**A STRATEGIST'S
FIRST BATTLE IS IN
HIS HEAD.**





DIE HARD: NAKATOMI PLAZA

Just like the film or another lazy licensed howler? *Martin Korda* gets stuck in

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Piranha Games
PUBLISHER VU Games
WEBSITE www.piranha-games.com
OUT March 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Accurately modelled locations from the film
- ★ Morale system determines your reactions and the AI's reaction to you
- ★ Some half-decent AI
- ★ You play John McClane

You've seen the film, right? It's an action flick classic and no arguments about it. Unfortunately, as with most action flick classics which have whored out their licences to the gaming industry, it's had its fair share of pitifully inept PC spin-offs, an accolade that developer Piranha Games is keen to avoid (naturally) with its new FPS *Die Hard: Nakatomi Plaza*. In fact, the game's producer Chris Miller goes as far as to claim that it's 100 per cent true to the film,

including accurately recreated locations lifted straight from the set. As Chris explains, "We're true to the story and most of the main plot elements. A lot of the new content revolves around what McClane was doing when he wasn't on screen." Sounds good, so I proceeded to grill Chris further about what we can expect from the final product, while simultaneously trying to shoot some German terrorists.

As I popped out a couple of bad guys' eyeballs with a few well-placed bullets, I couldn't help but think that the graphics looked a bit cack. Let's be honest now, it's no *Unreal II* is it? However. While it may be lacking in the aesthetic department, underneath resides a highly entertaining game, which is shaping up to be far more than its looks suggest. For starters there's a six point hit system which disrupts both your aim and your enemy's, while targeting different areas of the body causes varying amounts of damage. And with a relieving dose of poetic licence you're

provided with seven weapons with which to blast away the lederhosen-wearing sausage munchers. While I only got to sample the handgun and basic machine-gun, Chris assured me that there would be three other bullet-based weapons (one with a scope) and some specialist ones such as an axe and a fire extinguisher.

WELCOME TO THE PARTY

Morale also plays a vital role in your encounters. As Chris explains, "Morale determines how well the AI reacts to you. There's a large system of checks and balances that affect how difficult the game is. How the player acts and reacts to individual situations determines his morale and in return determines how hard the game may be. The system helps, but not forces, the player to be sympathetic to his surroundings." What struck me most, however, was the overall quality of the AI. Charging into a room while looking for a bomb I desperately needed to diffuse, a group of loitering

heavies instantly dived for cover, rolled out of danger and shot at me from behind tables. Chris proudly boasted that if you get too close while an enemy is reloading, they'll even engage you in a mortal game of slapsies. It may not have been *Medal Of Honor* quality, but it certainly surprised the hell out of me.

YIPPEE, ETC

With a whole host of weapons at your disposal and many mission goals, including saving Argyle (the gormless limo driver in the parkade, surely you remember him?), restoring the power supply and saving incompetent SWAT teams, it's looking like being the best PC *Die Hard* game to date. We've been promised review code next issue when we'll bring you our final verdict but, until then, you can pass the time and console yourself with the excellent demo on this month's cover CD. In fact, why not see if you can spot which part of the film it's from? Because that would be sad, Martin. Oh yes.



PERCHED

ON

**A CLIFF TOP,
SILENT, COLD
& ALONE. THERE'S ONLY
ONE THING WORSE
THAN BEING A SNIPER.
BEING HIS PREY.**



BEACH LIFE

Mark Hill grew up next to a beach, which may explain why he hates tourists so much

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Deep Red
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
WEBSITE www.deepred.co.uk
OUT Summer

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ It's based on a concept by Ian Livingstone
- ★ There's tons of detail
- ★ It should be very funny

Ahh, holidays in Ibiza... The sun, the sex, the German techno music, the foam parties, the night-time Es and the morning Js, the wide-open bloodshot eyes, the factor 75 suntan lotion. It closely resembles my personal idea of hell (except for the second item on the list). There's only one way to turn it into something fun, and that's to make a game out of it. Which is precisely what Milton Keynes-based developer Deep Red has gone and done, although the original concept is attributed to the head of Eidos, the legendary Ian Livingstone.

The idea is to manage different resorts, all of which are populated by moronic, sex-starved hooligans and dippy, sex-starved slappers. Just like in those awful Sky docusoaps. In the hands of some lesser developer it could be a recipe for cringeworthy dullness. But with the likes of *Risk II* and *Monopoly Tycoon* behind them, Deep Red could really make it work.

LIFE'S A BEACH

Everything you can imagine in a beach resort will be here: the cockroach-infested hotels, the overpriced bars, wet T-shirt contests, watersports and the like. You can also expect copious amounts of vomiting and sunburn, along with shark attacks, jellyfish and storms – these are just a few of the problems you'll face. There won't be any of the long periods of boredom featured in *The Sims* here.

Of course, the fact that *The Sims* is still riding high in the charts two years on is definitely part of the motivation behind *Beach Life*. Livingstone, not one to miss out on a good business opportunity, makes this clear when he says, "young people in particular have a lot of fun on holiday. It seemed to me to be the perfect experience to simulate in a game. Cheap booze, loud music, romance, polluted water, mosquitoes, hot sun, beach volleyball and everything else will combine to create people-watching at its best". We especially like the bit about "young people in particular". He sounds like your grandad giving you a pound to go to the cinema. When *Beach Life* comes out in the summer we're not expecting a classic, but if all goes well it could prove to be a pleasant surprise. After all, you don't need to go on a Club 18-30 holiday to enjoy giving a bunch of tossers food poisoning. **[CZ]**



① We're looking forward to getting a shark attack and turning this into Amity Island.



② Among the staff you can employ are lifeguards, security guards and holiday representatives.



③ The big party resorts are the islands of Ibiza and Ayia Napa.



④ We really want to look after these people. No, really.

**A COMMANDO'S
BACKPACK HOLDS**

THIRTY ROUNDS OF AMMUNITION,

A DOZEN

GRENADES,

ROCKET

LAUNCHER,

CHAIN GUN

AND PUMP ACTION SHOTGUN.

THERE'S NO ROOM FOR FEAR.



VIRTUA TENNIS

Strawberries and cream, you come on like a Dreamcast game. Advantage: **Steve Hill**

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Rowan
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive
WEBSITE www.empireinteractive.com
OUT March 2002

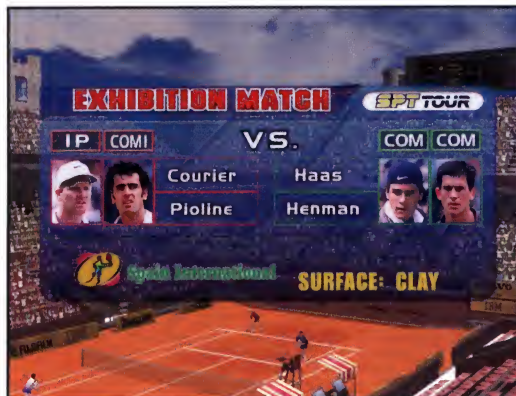
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ It's a classic Dreamcast game
- ★ Probably the best tennis game ever
- ★ Features real tennis stars
- ★ Supports four players

It came from the East, but it has now firmly gone west. The reasons for the failure of the Sega Dreamcast are manifold, be it the shit advertising campaign, the half-arsed – nay, superfluous – online strategy, or even the curious donation of £15 million to Arsenal Football Club. What can't be faulted is the quality of the hardware, or indeed the games. Of course it has its fair share of stinkers – not unlike the PC – but the console undeniably boasts a number of genuinely classic titles.

Virtua Tennis can comfortably include itself among that number, and in fact Dennis Publishing's erstwhile *Official Dreamcast Magazine* assembled a panel of experts who promptly voted it the number one game on the console. Time was you couldn't come in here without hearing the twang of racket on ball as another heated exchange took place during an extended lunch hour. Those days are long gone, as is the magazine, replaced by surly youths attending black monoliths bearing the legend PS2, perhaps the definitive reason for the Dreamcast's demise.

Virtua Tennis lives on though, and has recently spawned a sequel, which,



Ⓜ A host of courts and surfaces make for some variety.

were it still in existence, ODM would have inevitably showered with much-deserved "best just got better"-style plaudits. It's the original that we are concerned with here though, as it's heading towards the PC courtesy of Empire, who has sporadically provided us with similar conversions such as the passable *Sega Rally*.

ANYONE FOR DENNIS?

Empire promises that the brilliantly simple, yet wholly addictive, gameplay will remain intact, and is also boasting of an improved graphics engine, although the DC version is certainly no slouch. The PC game will feature seven famous male tennis players, plus ten hidden characters, and an array of tournaments will be available, with singles and doubles up for grabs. Much like sex, it's more fun with other people, and two-player games can be attempted via a combination of joystick and keyboard. It should also be possible to play a four-man doubles match over a LAN. Not the most obvious use for the office



Ⓜ Ludicrous training modes let you hone your skills.

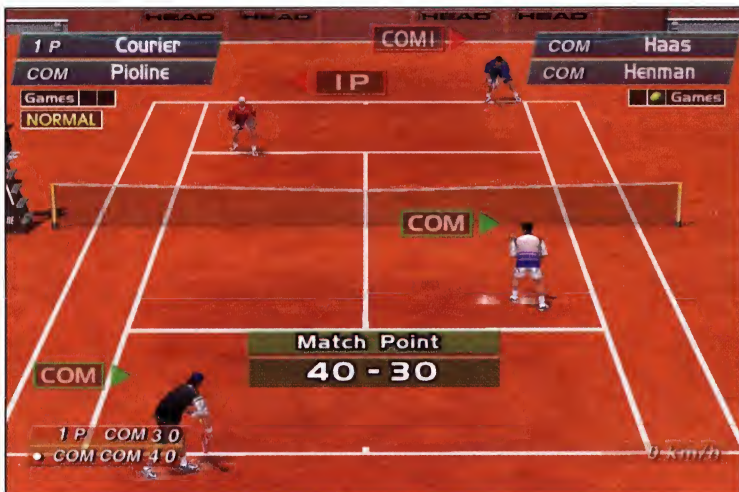
network, but you never know, it might just work.

Tennis games have never really been the PC's forte, but if they are ever to be accepted then this is the game to do it. Retro-bores may bang on about *Smash Tennis* on the Super Nintendo, but *Virtua* really is the definitive game of the sport, with the Dreamcast

version improving hugely on the arcade original. There's no reason to expect that the PC version will be any different, with the added advantage that you don't have to use Sega's ergonomically bankrupt joystick. One to look forward to then, although that said, you can probably buy a Dreamcast and a copy of the game for a tenner. **PC**



Ⓜ The replays are superb, even if the players do look like zombies.



Ⓜ Up to four players can compete at doubles. Babsy not Henman.



Ⓜ "You're going to have to move those."

TO SURVIVE IN BATTLE
YOU'LL NEED THE BEST
WEAPONS AVAILABLE:

THE MIND
OF A STRATEGIST,
THE STEALTH
OF A SNIPER
& THE GUTS
OF A COMMANDO.

THE EVIL FORCES OF NOD WILL USE ANY
MEANS NECESSARY TO DESTROY YOU.
IF YOU'RE NOT THE COMPLETE SOLDIER,
YOU WON'T BE THE COMPLETE VICTOR.



Westwood
STUDIO

PC CD-ROM



USE YOUR HEAD
TO OUTWIT THE ENEMY



INFILTRATE THE NOD BASE
AND ASSASSINATE YOUR FOE



BLAST THROUGH FIREFIGHTS
AND GRAB SOME INTEL



USE YOUR MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

These are the Jedis you've been looking for...

JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Raven
PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision
WEBSITE www.lucasarts.com
OUT April 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Lightsaber battles look and feel spectacular
- ★ Features classic locations and characters from *Star Wars* films and books
- ★ Mixture of all-out action and cunning stealth-based missions
- ★ Incidental background events such as X-Wings and TIE-fighters dogfighting overhead
- ★ Multiplayer game lets you choose the colour of your lightsaber.

Keith Pullin's lightsaber is glowing as LucasArts create a force to be reckoned with

There are several ways to become a Jedi Knight: You could knock on George Lucas' door and demand a leading role in *Star Wars: Episode III*. Alternatively you could go down the pub, sink ten pints of loudmouth soup and leap from table to table swinging a big stick around claiming to be Luke Skywalker. Failing that you could sit cross-legged in the middle of an RAF base and attempt to levitate Harrier Jump Jets using nothing but the power of your mind. However, by far the easiest

is to wait a couple of months and play *Jedi Knight 2: Jedi Outcast*.

DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE...

A mere year in development, *JK2* has to be one of the quickest high-profile games ever made. On one hand this is great news: we'll have a *Star Wars* first-person shooter utilising *Quake III: Team Arena* technology upon us before we can say: "Aren't you a little short to be a stormtrooper?" On the

at the helm signs are also good. With the bulk of the code already in place, technicalities aside, all Raven has to do is tweak the gameplay and create the *Star Wars* character models and scenery. And even then they're saving time by re-using levels from previous *Dark Forces* and *Jedi Knight* games.

For more cynical gamers the words 'cheats' and 'rip-off' immediately spring to mind. Yet, cast your mind back to some of the stunning level

❖ If you thought the feel of the lightsaber in the first game was special, wait till you get your hands on this

other hand, there's the distinct possibility that this project may have been just a little rushed.

The fact that the Q3 engine is powering this latest escapade is reassuring, and with Raven software

design seen in *Jedi Knight* and *Mysteries Of The Sith* and it's easy to understand why levels like the Vertical City have been brought back.

Don't be misled into thinking this is just a 21st-century remake though.



Ⓜ Force lightning, go force lightning.



Ⓜ Is it Boba Fett's spaceship? Is it just a big weird lump? Or is it a Cardassian?



Ⓜ To beat a Sith Lord at his own game you need to play dirty.

Admittedly *JK2* has its fair share of 'hand-me-downs', yet LucasArts has also delved deep into *Star Wars* mythology to deliver original designs with a familiar feel. Cloud City where Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker fought in *The Empire Strikes Back* is one of many locations fans will recognise from the films. But if that still isn't reassuring enough for you, you can always design your own, on the *JK2* level editor that will ship with the game.

MR TROOPER I PRESUME?

The plot of *JK2* is loosely based upon *Star Wars* novels covering events proceeding *Return Of The Jedi*, and of course *JK* and *Mysteries Of The Sith*. So, without getting bogged down in history, let's just say that ex-Jedi, Kyle Katarn is back and must relearn how to use The Force (how can you forget how to use something like that?) in order to eliminate one of the most menacing threats the galaxy has faced.

In other words it's business as usual with hordes of stormtroopers and a whole cacophony of strange beasts to blast, annihilate, disseminate and destroy in as many ways as you can possibly think of during 20 levels of futuristic, FPS brutality.

Well mostly FPS. We say mostly because it's possible to use any of the game's 12 weapons in a third-person view. Generally speaking you'll probably want to give that a miss; as always it's the first-person viewpoint where the Q3 engine really excels.

The only exception is the lightsaber – and what a shimmering beam of beauty it is too. To truly appreciate the splendour of this devastating tool, the third-person view is a must. If you thought the feel of the lightsaber in the first game was special, wait until you get your sweaty hands around this little number. The showering display of sparks and amazing sound effects as lightsaber



Ⓜ Sparks will fly. No ho.



Ⓜ *JK2* contains one of the most powerful zoom modes ever.

crashes upon lightsaber almost brings tears to your eyes.

Equally impressive are the Jedi training at the Jedi Academy on Yavin 4. You can watch them perform huge leaps, spring off walls, spin, roll and more, all of which you will eventually be able to do yourself – once you've mastered The Force.

GROUND FORCE?

As in *JK*, mastering your Force powers is imperative. There are 11 of them in total including mind trick, lightning, saber throw, heal and jump – all with three power-up levels. This is slightly different from the way Force worked in *JK*, as Graham Fuchs from Activision explains: "We've forgone the Light Side/Dark Side stars from the previous titles. Here, as you



❶ If you get into a lightsaber fight, it's best to switch to third-person view.



❷ Force throw lets you control your lightsaber by remote.



❸ Even stormtroopers are smart enough to run away from a lightsaber.

instantly. It's also possible to use combinations of two or more powers at once.

But once again, fans of the original *JK* will be worried that they have no influence whatsoever over the way their character develops. This was after all a popular feature of *JK* that added a very subtle, yet albeit distinct RPG slant to the game.

MULTIPLE ATTACK

It's not all bad news though. In the multiplayer game the availability of Force powers as pick-ups means you can still develop your character the way you want. And while we're on the subject, expect the usual array of multiplayer treats encompassing a dozen maps and 32-player Capture The Flag, Deathmatch and Free-for-all game types. And as an extra bonus, LAN and Internet players even get to choose the colour of their lightsaber. OK, it may sound petty, but it's something obsessive *Star Wars* fans have been crying out for. There is a practical use too; it provides online Jedis with a totally unique look.



❹ Playing around with crossbows is dangerous. Don't do it kids.

progress through the game, your Force powers increase naturally. Usually at the end of a level you are told which power has increased. What we've tried to do is have a distinct level for each of the powers. Rather than just adding another star so that

But what other weapons will we be treated to? As previously mentioned there are 12 in total including your standard blaster, a stun baton, a rather tasty crossbow, trusty old thermal detonators, a wicked laser rifle featuring an über-powerful

As an extra bonus, LAN and Internet players even get to choose the colour of their lightsaber

you can run a little faster or jump a little higher, each power-up level does something different."

The Heal Force is a perfect example of this. You can only use first level heal while standing still; second level heal can be used whilst running and attacking though it heals over time; and third level heal acts

zoom, and a lethal disintegrate gun that does exactly that. Standard model damage also applies, as in a single shot to the head proves infinitely more effective than a dozen or so blaster shots into a stormtrooper's foot. You'll also be delighted to learn that all enemies can be dismembered in some way with the lightsaber.

CV



LUCASARTS

Founded in 1982 by George Lucas, LucasArts has had its ups and downs over the last 20 years. Highlights include:

2001 *Star Wars: Galactic Battlegrounds* – Best Star Wars RTS game ever

2001 *Escape From Monkey Island* – Latest in the excellent *Monkey Island* series of point-and-click adventures

1999 *Star Wars: Force Commander* – We laughed... and we laughed... and we laughed... and we still laugh

1999 *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine* – A great action/adventure that does justice to the *Indy* franchise.

1998 *Grim Fandango* – Updated SCUMM interface and award-winning point-and-click adventure

1998 *Star Wars: Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II* – Took the original *Dark Forces* and made it a hundred times better

1993 *Sam & Max Hit The Road* – One of the best point-and-click adventures of all time

1990 *Maniac Mansion* – The first appearance of the SCUMM interface

SCUM AND VILLAINY

JK2 boasts much more background entertainment than any other *Star Wars* shooter before it. X-Wings and TIE-fighters dogfight overhead in huge outdoor levels, and other Jedis and Rebel troops can be seen engaged in their own private battles against Empire forces that include AT-STs and Sith Lords as well as the usual 'troopers. The amount of enemies on screen is often staggering, and with blaster shots zipping around like fireflies the effect is dizzying.

Stealth is also just as important with some levels specifically suited to coverts rather than extroverts. What always remains constant though, regardless of the type of mission you're on, is the overriding sense that you are just a small part in a much, much bigger event unfolding around you.

Watch out too for aesthetically pleasing touches such as smashing through glass ceilings and the fading screams of your enemies as they plummet down bottomless chasms. One level even has a meteor shower to negotiate. There are also permanent gun emplacements to make the most of – something for all you *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* fans to relish.

AI too is highly impressive with some of the weaker enemies fleeing if they spot you carving up one of their comrades with your lightsaber; the

DOES COLOUR MATTER?

Only when it comes to lightsabers...

The lightsaber is undoubtedly the star of *Jedi Knight II*, but why is it you can choose its colour in the multiplayer game, yet not be offered the same freedom in single-player mode? We had to ask.

LucasArts response to this seemingly innocent question is surprisingly nervy. Tom Sarris, director of public relations offers this explanation. "We have to be consistent with what happens in the films, and choosing the colour of your lightsaber would represent an inconsistency. While it may be something players want, we still have to adhere to the *Star Wars* rules."

So, presumably when you find yourself slicing and dicing other Jedis online, normal rules don't apply?

"Licensing does give us latitude when it comes to multiplayer. When it comes to single-player we have to stick to the rules much more strictly. I know it sounds hypocritical, but in multiplayer there has to be a little bit more latitude given and thankfully licensing gave us that."

If that's the case, what can we expect from *Star Wars: Galaxies*? Purple Ewoks piloting black X-Wings with neon tail strips? Tie-dyed Wookiees? Rapping stormtroopers? You have to wonder...



Jedi's fearsome reputation escapes no one it seems. Friendly troops will also assist you if they can, as will other Jedi Knights. Luke Skywalker also offers his assistance at one point, along with other classic *Star Wars* characters like the Artoo units.

CONTROVERSY WILL REIGN SUPREME

All these delights are played out over nine different environments ranging from space stations to vast outdoor levels. As you would expect, each one of these is painstakingly detailed and in homage to *JK2*'s predecessor the sheer dramatic sense of size and space is utterly breathtaking. Couple that with John Williams' dynamic soundtrack and the scene is set for one hell of a *Star Wars* experience.

Controversy and disagreement will not be far away though. Your lack of influence over the way Kyle develops will cause friction amongst the reviewing fraternity, and importing old levels from ancient games is another contentious issue. Still, with everything else that *JK2* has up its sleeve, we can't help feeling that good

will triumph over evil, and that ultimately we'll be treated to the kind of quality shooter a marriage between *Star Wars* and *Quake III* should surely produce. Roll on April. **PCZ**

Q&A

TOM SARRIS



The director of public relations at LucasArts, Tom is also a huge fan of British music and sport. Plus he's played the odd videogame or two.

PCZ What was the first game that you ever played?

TOM I think it was *Pong* on the Intellivision. The first game I ever played extensively though was some kind of top-down racer at the arcades. I can't remember its name – it had a steering wheel though.

PCZ What was the first LucasArts game you ever played?

TOM *Sam & Max Hit The Road* – I can't even find the adjectives to describe what an amazing game that is. Tim Schaffer is a genius. Actually, I've heard rumours that a company called Infinite Machine is going to do another *Sam & Max* game, but I don't know if that's true.

PCZ What's your favourite game ever?

TOM I'm a huge Formula One fan so it has to be *F1 97* on the PlayStation. Failing that *Colin McCrae Rally 2.0*, I love that game especially in multiplayer.

PCZ What game has inspired you, or made you think that you wish you'd been involved with it in some way?

TOM *The Sims* had made a lot of people jealous at LucasArts because it is such a clever idea. *Rollercoaster Tycoon* and the *Theme Park*-type games have also been an inspiration.

PCZ What do you think of Jar Jar Binks?

TOM Personally I'm not a fan. For me he makes *Star Wars* a bit too goofy.

PCZ Have you ever been in a fight? And what happened?

TOM Just once. This guy said something to me that upset me, so I hit him in the side of the face, but he never punched back. And that was that.



ⓐ A classic good versus evil confrontation.

Oo!...

You may not know his name, but
you know his games. *Mark Hill*
talks to a real hero



PROFILE

KEN LEVINE

A superhero among
game designers

Developer Irrational Games

Position General manager and
creative director

Fave game *X-Com*

Also worked on *Thief: The Dark Project* and
System Shock 2



LEVINE, WHAT'S YOUR GAME?



Combining the comic book styling with RPG combat makes more sense than you'd imagine.



Combat is a simple point-and-click affair, with superpowers selectable from a menu.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Irrational Games
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
WEBSITE www.freedomforcecenter.com
OUT April 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's from the makers of *System Shock 2*, which is one of our favourite games of all time
- The design brief is very much in keeping with the spirit of comic book design
- Deep RPG elements
- Multiplayer superhero action

Meanwhile, back in 1995... A decent screenwriter and playwright is going about his usual business when a nearby building containing experimental

chemicals, radioactive processors and, err..., alien keyboards, explodes, surely killing the poor wordsmith. But no. He rises from the rubble. From this day forth Ken Levine will be known as... Game Designer Man.

Well, it could have happened like that. All that matters is that the game industry gained a massive talent when Ken joined Looking Glass to become the main man behind the groundbreaking *Thief* and the extraordinary *System Shock 2*. After the company collapsed, he co-founded Irrational Games and is now working on what will surely be another classic: *Freedom Force*, a tactical/RPG tongue-in-cheek homage to the silver age of superhero comics.

PCZ Despite the gameplay potential of superheroes, we've seen relatively little of them on the PC, while consoles

are bursting with shallow, wasted licences. Why do you think that is?

KEN An excellent question. I can't imagine a more natural setting for a computer game than superheroes. You essentially are a superhero in most games you play (unless the average guy can absorb two shots from a BFG); you just don't wear the spandex. Well, we went the extra mile and included the spandex. The major reason we didn't utilise a licence is because we asked ourselves the same

question: 'Why are all the licensed superhero games so lame?' We couldn't help but think that part of the reason is because they were, well, licensed. Creating our own universe for *Freedom Force*, ironically, allowed the game to be more like real comic books than if we had licensed some existing franchise and then been obliged to do a fighting game with it. **PCZ 2002 should be a good year for superheroes, with Spiderman and a rejuvenated Batman hitting the big**

ACCIDENTAL HEROES

So which superheroes will you find in the game then? Here are some of the main ones

Minuteman

Freedom Force's version of Captain America, he is prone to patriotic speeches and is the leader of the gang. Besides increased strength and endurance, Minuteman uses a semi-intelligent weapon called Patriot and a pair of titanium alloy gauntlets. He sounds like a right tallywhacker.

Manbot

This guy has so much power coursing through him he needs a special suit to harness it (a bit like Cyclops' visor). He doesn't like fighting though and thinks he causes more harm than good. He too thinks Minuteman sounds like a choad.

Alche-Miss

A sort of female Chris Anderson (Alche-Mister?), she is sarcastic and

waves her hands like a typical RPG wizard. Unlike Chris, she is beautiful and things actually happen when she waves her hands.

Then there's...

The Ant (like Spiderman only with the powers of an ant), El Diablo (sort of an Hispanic Human Torch) and a load of others. But if you don't like any of these and you want to play with some recognisable heroes, you can create them using the special tools that ship with the game. Or, if you're too damn lazy, you can download them from one of the many fansites (such as www.freedomforcecenter.com), where you'll already be able to find thousands including the likes of the Hulk, Batman, Superman, Spiderman plus a whole slew of characters you've never heard of.



While the existing characters are very cool, you can create a whole new set if you want to.



➤ RPG fans will be pleased to hear that *Baldur's Gate 2* has been a major influence.

screen. Do you think you will profit from this?

KEN No, they'll profit from us... OK, I'm a big liar. I'm gonna go out on a limb here... The most important character in modern American literature is Batman. What other fictional character appears in so many media, so many times a month, under so many different creative teams? Last I looked, there weren't three or four *Hamlet* shows on TV, and a trip to the store didn't let you pick up a *Hamlet* graphic novel and a *Hamlet* videogame. Now, one might argue that this is a poor reflection on our

also going heavily into the user modification area.

PCZ *SS2* was quite a serious game (not to mention incredibly atmospheric and scary). It must be quite a big change working on a more light-hearted and humorous title. Is it?

KEN Personally, I'm simultaneously working on a survival horror PS2 game (*The Lost*) which is fairly similar to *Shock 2*, so my writing chores on *Freedom Force* are a refreshing change. I've always dreamed of being a comic book writer, so *Freedom Force* was a natural thing for me, the easiest

“The most important character in modern American literature is Batman. What other character appears in so many different media, so many times a month?”

culture, but it is true nonetheless. Super-powered heroes are the modern mythology. I think society is embracing them more than ever, and we will surely benefit from the public's acceptance of them.

PCZ How many people on the *Freedom Force* team worked on *System Shock 2*? What did you learn from that title and incorporate into *FF*?

KEN A bunch, including myself (lead designer of *System Shock 2*) and Jon Chey (project lead of *SS2*). Sound designer Eric Brosius (of *Shock 2* and *Thief* fame) is handling the bumps and gurgles once again. And numerous people in the Boston office are actively consulting on the game. I think *System Shock 2* defined the kind of games Irrational makes, which is giving the player a lot of choice about how they play their game. *Shock 2* was essentially a shooter that used its RPG elements to let you decide how to face the challenges of the game. It also had a strong simulational component. *Freedom Force* does things much the same way (except it's a tactical game with lots of RPG elements) and in addition, we are

writing gig I've ever had. I think Jon, the project leader, was interested in a change, too. We had both worked on two dark first-person games in a row, and now wanted to try something in a different gameplay and aesthetic genre.

PCZ What games would you say have influenced you most in the design of *Freedom Force*?

KEN Easy - *X-Com*, *Baldur's Gate 2* (I bow to the Bioware guys), *Jagged Alliance* and *Syndicate Wars*.

PCZ How do the RPG elements work and how deep do they go?

KEN The RPG system is pretty deep. For a start, you have your base character stats that dictate the lowest levels of interaction each character can have with the world. Speed determines how fast they can move, endurance determines the amount of health points, and so on.

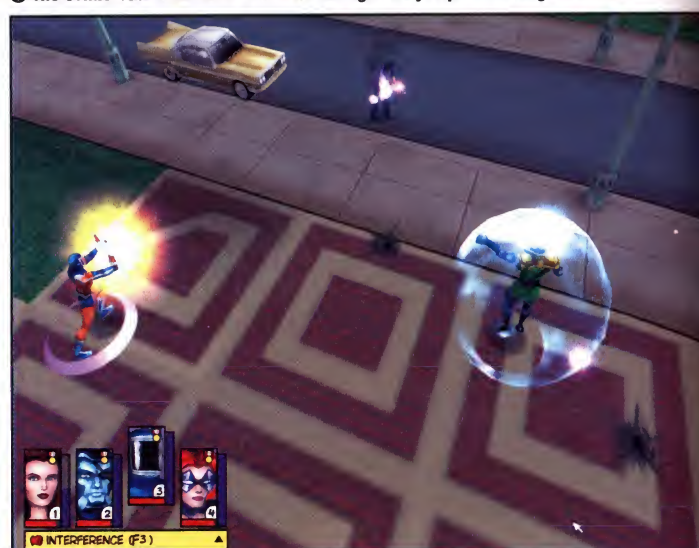
Additionally, your character can be made of a number of materials, each one of which affects their base resistance to damage. For example, characters made from metal are resistant to crushing and piercing attacks, whereas characters made



➤ New superpowers are gained by levelling up, in typical RPG style.



➤ The comic book aesthetic is carried through every aspect of the game.



➤ As a defender of justice, using your superpowers to ignite civilians may be frowned upon.

from fire are highly resistant to heat but vulnerable to cold.

Then you have the character's attributes. These are the funky things that help flesh your character out. Most attributes will give you an advantage and so cost you character points, but some are actually

detrimental and therefore give you back character points to spend elsewhere. There are more than 60 attributes, but included in here are things like Crack Shot (increase your accuracy), Level Headed (become more resistant to Mental and Mystical damage) and Flier (allows you to fly).



❶ A Black & White kind of element whereby you could turn to the dark side of justice might have been interesting. Maybe in the sequel...



❷ The cheaper way of getting absolutely hammered.

Finally you have the powers. Each single-player character has a pair of tiers for their powers that you have to advance them through by spending character points. Each character can have up to ten powers, and most powers can be upgraded to level five (an increase in level can have all sorts of effects, depending on the power type).

Powers and attributes are upgraded using character points, which are rewarded to the character each time they get enough experience points to level up. Characters get experience by going on missions. So there should be plenty there for everyone...

PCZ Tell us more about how the combat system works...

KEN Combat is very easy in *Freedom Force* (which is good, since that's what you're going to spend a lot of your time doing). In its simplest form, you just point and click on an enemy. However, you can right-click on an enemy and bring up the command menu, which is where the groovy stuff happens. The command menu displays all of the attacks or actions that would be appropriate for the object you've right-clicked on. If it's a car, you'll get the pick-up command, but if it's an enemy, you'll get all of your usable powers displayed.

PCZ Is the slowing-down of time anything like *Max Payne's* bullet time?

KEN No, it's not a gameplay system thing; it's strictly about giving the user as much time as they need to plan their actions. Some people play the game like *Baldur's Gate*, where they pause a lot and input their commands. Others play it slowing down and speeding up the action as needed. Others never pause at all, but I'm way too old for that kind of grief.

PCZ Will the player have any freedom to move around a big city, or is it more of a linear mission-based affair?

KEN The game is a mission-based affair. However, you can play the missions a number of different ways and you may choose to take (in general) any four heroes on any mission, whether these heroes are of our creation or yours. Ultimately, it's up to you.

PCZ How did you go about creating a destructible environment, considering that it didn't work that well in the FPS *Red Faction*?

KEN Well, *Red Faction* had a totally different problem. They needed to restrict the flow of the character through the levels, therefore only some of their environment could be dynamic. What do you do if the player simply blasts their way to the end of the level, circumventing all the rooms you built in between? Our basic design takes this into account. Games such as *Freedom Force*, (like *X-Com* and *Syndicate Wars*) are about tactical battles, not about progressing



IRRATIONAL GAMES

They may be relative newcomers to the field, but what a pedigree

1999 *System Shock 2* – Technically a Looking Glass game, but most of the people on it have joined Irrational Games

2002 *Freedom Force* – Finally, superheroes make it to the PC

through a linear space. We don't have any blocking 'locked doors' in our game and therefore the environment is an emergent part of any battle, as cover disappears, buildings fall down on top of you, and, worst of all, you find yourself on the receiving end of a city bus that knocks you through a row of apartment blocks.

PCZ How much will people be able to do with the character creation tools?

Are these only for multiplayer purposes or can you use them in the single-player game?

KEN You can absolutely use them in the single-player game as well as in multiplayer. Since we released the character viewer last summer, there's been a great amount of support for it from the *Freedom Force* community. There are literally hundreds of hero and other kinds of skins already built. I recently downloaded a Bill Clinton skin and added him to my *Freedom Force* team. I built a power for him called 'Lulling Soliloquy' that pacified threats and charmed foes.

PCZ How exactly is the multiplayer going to work?

KEN In multiplayer you assemble a squad of characters whose points total is mutually agreed by the players. You then pick a map and pit your characters against one-three other squads of similarly selected characters.

PCZ Who's your favourite superhero and your favourite comic?

KEN I am now, and will always be, a Spiderman dork. In fact, I just read the issue today where Aunt May discovers Peter is Spiderman and now I have to wait till next month to find out what happens. Pins and needles, man.

PCZ Does the 1960s comic look of *Freedom Force* reflect the age of the Irrational Games team?

KEN Well, Jon, Eric and I are pretty damn old (for the games industry, though I'm the youngest). I grew up after the silver age and cut my teeth in the mid '70s. However, I quickly got my hands on reprints of silver age stuff as a kid and devoured it whole. I'm creepily familiar with all comics...

PCZ And before we could quiz him further, Ken Levine waved, jumped out of the window and flew back to his office. Apparently. [LAUGHS]

He's bald, he can shoot...

HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER IO Interactive
PUBLISHER Eidos
WEBSITE www.eidos.co.uk
OUT April 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ You get paid... to kill people
- ★ Five times the level of graphical detail
- ★ Musical score performed by the Budapest Symphony Orchestra
- ★ Stealth or full-on action: you decide
- ★ In-mission save

Copenhagen is renowned for two things: beer and *Hitman* developer IO Interactive. Dave Woods is a fan of both...

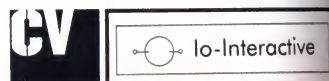
Wonderful, wonderful Copenhagen? I don't think so. The roads might be wide, and the standard of living high but have you seen how much the locals charge for a pint of beer? And have you trekked for miles down deserted industrial walkways in search of the mythical Little Mermaid just to find a 4ft high statue perched on a pebble in a murky river? Admittedly the moment was saved by the sight of a pack of tourists returning from said monument with faces like they'd just indulged in a spot of collective lemon-sucking, but still...

Thankfully though, Copenhagen has one hidden treasure: IO Interactive, developer of the fantastic *Hitman* game. We loved it and a first-hand look at the soon-to-be-released sequel was well worth the short-haul flight.

THE FRÖLICH MANOEUVRE

The original *Hitman*, Codename 47, was a peculiar beast. Succinctly amoral, the idea of the game was to kill a target by any means necessary, disposing of anyone else that gets in your way, innocent or otherwise. It led to a mass of forehead-slapping in development houses across the world ("now why didn't we think of that") and although it delivered in certain areas (graphics, musical score and concept), it was somewhat sullied by over enthusiastic and injudicious use of cut-scenes, hampered by technology restraints and hamstrung by the lack of a save game option, which meant you had to keep playing the same bit of the game over and over again.

Talking with Thor Frølich, the self-styled Ninja Extraordinaire at IO, and watching the game in action it's obvious that *Silent Assassin* is almost like the director's cut of the first. Everything that was good about the original has been kept and improved upon (concept, visual style, stirring music – see boxout for more information – freedom of choice and



IO INTERACTIVE

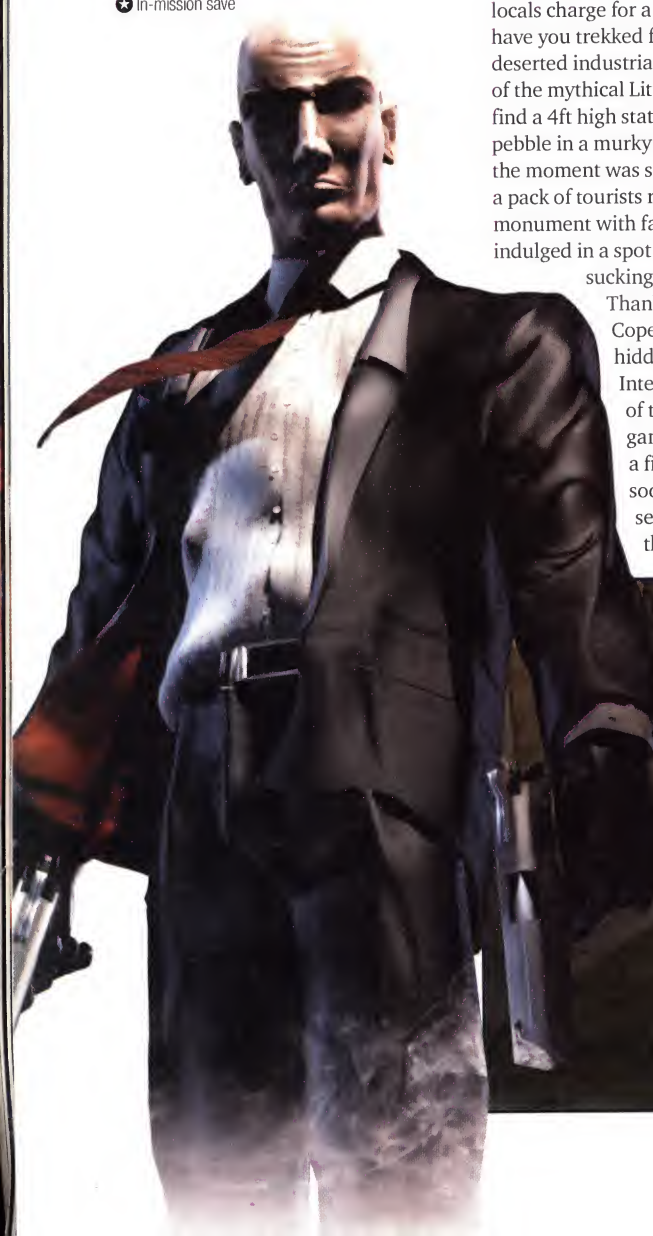
Founded in 1998 IO Interactive is the best thing to come out of Denmark since beer, and despite the inexperience of the team, its first and only game to date was a major success.

2000 *Hitman: Codename 47* is released and reviewer Paul Presley is smitten. Despite some unfriendly reviews elsewhere it goes on to sell over 400,000 copies, clearing the way for the *Silent Assassin*.

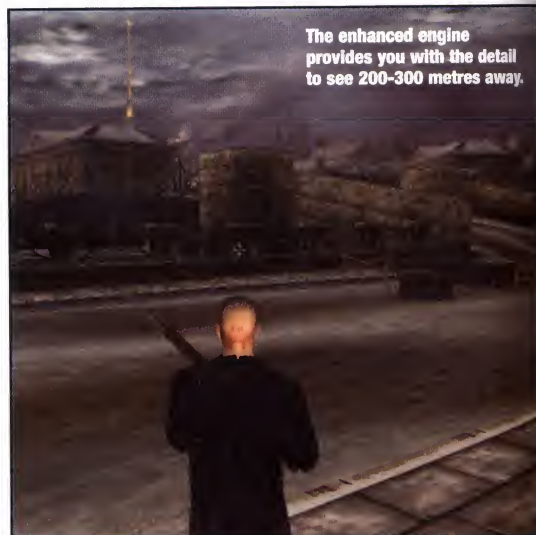
lack of general moral overtone) and everything that was bad has been rectified. So, you won't find any cut-scenes in the middle of intense gun battles and you'll be able to save your game during each mission.

GRACIAS AGIMUS TIBI

Graphically, the engine has been poked to provide almost five times the level of detail as *Hitman 1*, and that means you can expect to see up to



Commonly known as 'the ginger effect'.



The enhanced engine provides you with the detail to see 200-300 metres away.



Look, take the shades off, you're not fooling anyone.

200-300 metres in your line of sight. Dramatic real-time lighting has also been introduced, which provides much greater immersion and a more 'real' and natural feel to the graphics.

The game kicks off in a Sicilian monastery, where you are trying to make some sense of your life by tending the gardens and chatting with your spiritual mentor Father Vittorio. Thankfully, he gets kidnapped and before you can say Ave Maria you have been sucked back into your previous profession.

Cue missions with locations as diverse as St Petersburg, Japan, Malaysia and India, with a simple central theme running through each:

“The game kicks off in a Sicilian monastery, where you are trying to make some sense of your life”

kill your target and get the hell out. How you do this is up to you. As with the original the game isn't supposed to be about running around with a rocket launcher, but although stealth is the cleanest way through, guns-blazing is an option if that's all you know.

NOT HIM, HIM

One of the levels we were shown illustrated this perfectly. You're told to assassinate a general and given certain visual clues. Unfortunately, as you approach your target you're updated with news that he's in a meeting with other generals. More clues are given such as “he smokes”, “he's right-handed” and using these and other aids you have to make sure you take out the right one. As Thor Frølich explained: “this is obviously much harder if you decide to break the door

down and take the direct approach. You'll only have a few seconds to react before the element of surprise is gone.”

And, in deference to the hordes of FPS fans who got on IO's back after the first game, there is a first-person perspective you can switch to, although the team is adamant that most of the game plays best in the third person, with the new perspective being good for pixel-perfect shooting and sniping.

AI is being tweaked as we speak, and although the code we played wasn't advanced enough to illustrate the point, guards will supposedly check you out if you're acting in a suspicious manner, and they'll be far more adept at spotting a second-rate disguise. To

help you keep your distance you can lie flat as well as crouch down, and if slaughtering innocent security guards made you feel a bit queasy in the first place you'll be pleased to hear that you can use your weapons to pistol-whip others into a submissive state of unconsciousness, or you can use a range of non-lethal weaponry such as chloroform and stun guns.

Extreme and unprovoked violence is still the way we'll play the game though. And after talking to IO the only criticism I've got is that the team has deliberately curbed some of its more extreme ideas in order to stop the game being banned in several hot-spots across the world. It's almost enough to make you want to take out a general contract on religious bigots and conservative moralists the world over. Maybe in *Hitman 3*... [M]



Well maybe we were a little hasty...



Pick your spot, then kill with extreme prejudice.



Use the visual clues you're fed to make sure you kill the right general.

“LIFE WITHOUT MUSIC WOULD BE AN ERROR”

The stirring score in the first game was a revelation, and thankfully IO has decided to keep and improve on one of the best features from the original. Play *Silent Assassin* and you can expect to hear more than 40 minutes of original

music performed by the Budapest Symphony Orchestra while you're busy killing dignitaries. The orchestra consists of 60 musicians and a choir of 50 singers, and presumably comes cheaper than the BBC Philharmonic.



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REVIEWS



Slip-sliding away

★ **REVIEWS EDITOR** Martin Korda



You're away from the office for a couple of weeks and what happens? You come back and just about every big-name game's release date has slipped. Imagine my horror at the prospect of elevating *WWII - Iwo Jima* (page 101) to a six-page lead review, closely followed by *The Amazing Virtual Sea-Monkeys* (page 100). OK, so it wasn't quite that bad, but this month is a classic example of that most frustrating of problems in the games industry: delays. Constant delays. In fact if the games industry was public transport we'd have the masses picketing Tony Blair.

Fortunately, a few would-be AAA games did make it to us in time to feature in this issue. The massively delayed if now rather unanticipated *C&C: Renegade* finally reared up from Westwood's closed-off and highly secretive headquarters. Was it worth the wait? You can find out for yourself by turning to the next page.

Sid Meier's name is of course synonymous with legendary games such as *Civilization* and *Alpha Centauri*. After basing his past strategy games on such epic subjects as colonising outer space, it came as a huge surprise to us all in the *ZONE* basement when we heard he'd turned his hand to making a golf simulation. No one was more excited by this prospect than our very own self-confessed golfing addict Keith Pullin, who threatened to practice his teeing off with my head if I didn't let him review the finished product. You'll find his thoughts on page 70. However, if golf or shooters aren't your thing, then you can get into the spirit of the Winter Olympics by checking out Steve Hill's review of the official Winter Olympic game, *Salt Lake 2002* on page 74.

The upside of all this is that all the games we were expecting this month, we're now expecting next month. Of course we'll believe it when we see it, but at the moment we're hoping to get our mitts on the likes of *Soldier Of Fortune 2*, *Jedi Knight II*, *Warrior Kings*, *Star Wars: Starfighter*, *Dungeon Siege*, *Virtual Tennis*, *Die Hard: Nakatomi Plaza*, *Global Operations*, *Hit Man 2* and *Freedom Force*, which should be more than enough to make the mouth of even the most hardened cynic moisten to overflowing point. Of course half of them are bound to slip... again, so let's not get too excited just yet. OK?

MOST WANTED... ACTION ADVENTURES



HITMAN 2

Eidos • ETA April 2002

MAFIA

Take 2 • ETA May 2002

CALL OF CTHULHU

Fishtank • ETA Q1 2002

GALLEON

Interplay • ETA September 2002

THE THING

VU Games • ETA autumn 2002

NEXT GENERATION LARA

Eidos • ETA December 2002

LAST NINJA: THE RETURN

Studio 3 • ETA Christmas 2002

DUALITY

Phantagram • ETA late 2002

OUTCAST 2

Infogrames • ETA late 2002

SAM & MAX 2

Activision • ETA TBC

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call:

Acclaim 020 7344 5000 • **Activision** 08705 143525 • **CDV** 020 8880 4144 • **Codemasters** 01926 814132 • **Eidos** 020 8636 3000 • **Electronic Arts** 01932 450134 • **Empire Interactive** 020 8343 7337 • **EON** 0700 4366344 • **Infogrames** 0161 837 8000 • **Interplay** 020 7551 4222 • **Koch Media** 01256 707 767 • **Microdots** 01908 223 377 • **Microsoft** 08457 002 000 • **Midas** 01279 858000 • **Novalogic** 020 7324 8900 • **Rage Software** 0151 237 2200 • **Take 2 Interactive** 01753 854 444 • **THQ** 01483 767656 • **Ubi Soft** 01932 838 230 • **Virgin Interactive** 020 7551 4266 • **Vivendi** 01189 209100

MEET THE TEAM

All *PC ZONE*'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a fan of the genre

Which New Year's resolutions have you already broken?

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

90-100% If a game receives a

Classic award in *PC ZONE* you know that it's going to be brilliant. We reward originality and innovation, but we also rate games that take an existing genre to new heights. It's the experience that counts – if it delivers top-notch entertainment, we'll stamp it with our seal of approval and you should go out and buy it.



80-89% We don't give out 90% scores

willy-nilly and this means that there's a mass of superb games that miss out on the Classic rating. This is where the Award of Excellence comes in, an accolade for a game that we believe is far superior to others in the genre.



70-79% Our reviews are much more than just a number at the end. If a game scores in this category it's well worth a punt and provides quality entertainment, but make sure you read the text to see why we didn't think it was worthy of an Award of Excellence.

50-69% We score all our games from a full percentage which means that a score of 50% is an average game – worth considering if you're bored with life and there's no football on the television. Take this closer to the 70% mark and you're looking at a quality game with the ability to impress.

20-49% These games just about manage to keep their heads above the excrement, but only just and shouldn't be considered unless you've exhausted every other avenue. Why should you waste your time playing games that are sub-standard or below average? You're better off with one of our cover discs.

0-19% Incompetence, sloth or just a desire to cash in and make an easy buck? Either way, there are no excuses for these games. Avoid at all costs and if possible make a mental note of the developer's name and stick it on your blacklist.



DAVE WOODS

GENRE Shooters, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*

Giving up smoking and going to the gym twice a week



RICHIE SHOEMAKER

GENRE Action, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Command & Conquer: Renegade*

Drinking less Pepsi Max

C&C: RENEGADE

Can the inventors of RTS reinvent the FPS?

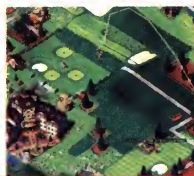
P.66



SIM GOLF

Tee off with Meier's latest strategy game

P.70



FEEDBACK

Your views on the latest games

P.106



REALITY CHECK

Steve Hill tries his hand at winter sports

P.108



REVIEWS POLICY

We're on this planet to serve you. You need to know which games are worth buying, which ones are worth considering for a rainy day and which ones you should point at and laugh. For that reason, *PC ZONE* works a little differently to any other games magazine.

FINISHED CODE

We only review finished code which is released by the publisher. On occasions this means reviewing from gold masters, but this still means that what we see is what you get in the box.

HONEST REVIEWING

If there are problems with a game we'll tell you about them even if it means falling foul of some of the big names in the industry. We're not in print to serve as an advertising tool to publishers or big name developers with an ego problem, we're here to give you our honest opinions of a game.

THE REVIEWERS

Our reviewers are the best in the industry both in terms of experience and ability. We also make sure that every game is reviewed by an expert in the field. You won't find an RTS being reviewed by an FPS fan, and you can be sure that the person reviewing a game has played all the benchmark titles and knows how each game stands up in the face of the bigger picture.

THE MACHINES

We test out the games we review across a variety of different machines and graphics cards. In our office we have access to a wider range of machines from the lowly P233 to the 1.4GHz behemoth. If we spot any aberrations between developer claims and real-life testing we'll let you know.

ONLINE GAMING

We review a lot of games before they go on sale, which means that it's impossible to properly review the online side of a game simultaneously. Instead of taking a wild guess, or testing it on the comfort of the office LAN, we'll wait until servers are running and then revisit the game in our dedicated online section.

DISAGREE?

After all this you might still disagree with us. If so then write in and complain to our Feedback section, which is where we give you the chance to have your say and where any rumblings are answered by the individual reviewer.

REVIEWS CONTENTS

66 COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE

70 SID MEIER'S SIM GOLF

74 SALT LAKE 2002

76 STAR TREK: ARMADA II

78 COSSACKS: THE ART OF WAR

79 UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: SEASON 2001/2002

81 GORASUL

82 ROCK MANAGER

100 RAYMAN M

100 THE AMAZING VIRTUAL SEA-MONKEYS

101 WWII - IWO JIMA

101 RALLY TROPHY

103 DIGGLES

103 UPLINK

104 BUDGET ZONE

We cast our eyes over the latest arrivals in the bargain bins.

106 FEEDBACK

Your chance to have your say on the games you love and hate the most.

108 REALITY CHECK

Steve Hill finds out how real-life winter sports compare to their gaming counterparts.



MARTIN KORDA

GENRE Action, strategy, sport
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Medal Of Honor* and *AvP2*

To eat more



ANTHONY HOLDEN

GENRE FPS, action/adventure, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Max Payne* and *Ghost Recon*

To be a better person



RHIANNA PRATCHETT

GENRE RPG, RTS, adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Diggles*

To make fewer random squealing noises in the office



MARK HILL

GENRE Adventure, RPG, FPS, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault*

To upset more people. The opportunity hasn't arisen so far



STEVE HILL

GENRE Management, sport, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Salt Lake 2002*

Being happy



KEITH PULLIN

GENRE Management, sport, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Civilization III*

They're all still going strong

COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE

★ £29.99 • Electronic Arts • Out March 1



Renegade has a few 'boss' units, of which this helicopter is the first.



Westwood's first foray into first-person action is up against some stiff resistance. A battle-hardened *Richie Shoemaker* signs up

It's a bold move when a game developer turns its hand to a genre it previously has little experience at. Certainly Westwood is more flexible than most software developers, as aside from having single-handedly created the modern strategy game, it has over the years released some

was a very bad online version of *Ikari Warriors*, basically, and even though it bore the C&C name, it probably wouldn't garner more than a few cursory lines in the 'Authorised History Of Westwood Studios', if such a book existed. The point is that while Westwood hasn't been afraid to dunk its potatoes in other pots of paint, the

doesn't quite offer the same level of realism or interaction it once hoped to. But it has to be said, for all the underwhelming features we are left with compared to other games in the genre, *Renegade* does at least feel like you are a part of the C&C world, as if in fact, that far above the maps across which you fight, there is a spotty young commander sitting at his PC dragging invisible boxes over the units around you and watching the war unfold across a 2D map.

“*Renegade* is two years past its original release date and clearly from what we saw more than three years ago, it hasn't quite kept up with the leaders in terms of looks”

passable titles outside of the select and direct world of *Command & Conquer's* toy soldiers. In fact, before it rose to become the biggest name in strategy gaming, Westwood was the crown prince of role-playing, having created both the *Eye Of The Beholder* and *Lands Of Lore* trilogies. In adventuring circles too, Westwood is fondly thought of, if not for the *Kyrandia* series, then for the still worth playing and comparatively youthful *Blade Runner*.

Not that we're for one moment suggesting Westwood has the Midas touch. Closer to a nugget of poo than gold was the online-only C&C: *Sole Survivor*, a prequel of sorts to the very game we're here to evaluate. It

finished picture hasn't always been worth sticking to the fridge door. And with FPSs especially, there are so many masterpieces around that there was a very real danger that C&C: *Renegade* could well be, well... a bit knob.

CRY HAVOC AND LET SLIP...

Renegade is two years past its original release date and clearly from what we saw more than three years ago, it hasn't quite kept up with the leaders in terms of looks. Back then it looked stunning, the AI showed immense promise, and there were plans to let players fly around in C&C's airborne vehicles. From that wish list only a few features remain intact; the name of the game for one, an optional third-person view and the fact that you can drive a few ground-based vehicles.

Evidently much has changed over the course of the game's protracted development and, for better or worse, due to technical limitations or whatever, *Renegade*

Though there isn't much in the way of commanding or conquering to be done, *Renegade* is cloaked head to toe in the trademark *Command & Conquer* uniform. For one thing, you play as one of the GDI's specialist commando units, so devastating in the strategy game that they could complete some missions unaided. Here of course you control one such commando, looking upon the world through his own eyes rather than from above. Captain 'Havoc' Parker is his name and despite the switch to 3D, he's about as one-dimensional as they get.

FIRST BLOOD

As is the case in film, to enjoy a game, especially one such as this, it is imperative that you can either relate to or sympathise with the character you are playing. For all his inane musings and constant gurning, Max Payne at least had motivations above that of just dealing death to





anyone who got in his way. Here you'd get the feeling that even John Rambo would be a bit embarrassed to know Mr Havoc. There's nothing wrong with wanting to save prisoners, sabotaging Nod buildings or killing hundreds of enemy soldiers of course, that's what soldiers do after all, it's just that in this case Havoc has so little else to his character that it won't be long until you wish you could just join the other side. Unfortunately you can't, you're stuck with him and it helps things considerably that it's only during the game's cut-scenes that you'll have the opportunity to want to put your fist through the screen, so relentless is the game in terms of pace. One minute you'll be running across open land gunning down Nod soldiers, another you'll be hopping into a tank taking helicopters out of the sky. Though the game is far from cerebral, there is at least enough to do to keep you entertained, albeit at a very basic level. Be prepared to leave your brain in the jar on the mantelpiece and you'll be happily

dribbling onto your keyboard, that's all I'm saying.

NODDING OFF

As has been the case with all of Westwood's strategy games, *Renegade* comes complete with a

your ex-girlfriend who had the good fortune to see sense and join the other side (no doubt after having met you) and of course plant your trademark C-4 explosives in Nod buildings to put them out of service.

“Renegade brings the C&C universe to life, but compared to other FPSs the AI is laughably basic, the graphics unsophisticated, the interface complicated and the characters clichéd and wooden”

suitably mundane storyline. Set just after the original *Command & Conquer*, you are sent to find out what The Brotherhood Of Nod are up to, having captured three leading Tiberium scientists for some secret project, which, inevitably, could change the course of the war. And so it's up to you to traverse the impressively large maps, either by foot or in one of the many vehicles either lying around or airlifted in especially for you, inevitably and gradually filling in the gaps in the story until the final showdown. Along the way you get to fight alongside your old Dead-6 commando unit, meet up with

Now despite claims of offering both all-guns-blazing missions and those where you might need to take things a little more quietly, for most of the game there is very little need to go around on tippy toes. Thanks to some pretty basic AI in fact, even in those instances where you might think you'd need to keep to the shadows to avoid being seen, it's rather fortunate

This was on the medium difficulty setting, but even on the harder of the three settings there seems to be no discernible difference to how the enemy reacts to your presence. They might be more numerous, have more health or have hidden ammo, but apart from that, difficulty doesn't have much bearing on how intelligent the enemy are.



for our gung-ho hero that the Nod soldiers have very little battle training. It's almost as if the Nod commanders have gone around their troops and said to them 'You stand there and if you see any of the enemy, either run towards them or shoot them. If possible, both.' That rather basic strategy seems to be the case for the vehicles as well. Occasionally a soldier may turn tail and run back around the corner, but not for any determinable reason other than they might have left the iron on.

But rather than be disappointed by the very crude intelligence exhibited by the enemy, it was in a sense just how it should be. The *Command & Conquer* strategy games have hardly been the most challenging of games. If you'd care to whip off your rose-tinted spectacles you'll remember how early *C&C* titles were dogged with poor path-finding. Even *Tiberian Sun* and *Red Alert 2* were both rather basic in terms of AI; the computer's only real advantage in battle being its obvious dexterity when it came to giving orders. True to form, here the enemy fights by the adage that it's quantity rather than quality that will win through, yet like every other seemingly substandard feature of the game, because it is *Command & Conquer*, we've become so used to its over-simplified world that you automatically forgive it if its failing. It's a bizarre thing to point out, but if the AI was as good as *Half-Life*, it just wouldn't feel right.

It's exactly the same story with the graphics: The sky is blue,



The vehicles maketh the game, especially in multiplayer.



SECOND OPINION

C&C fan Martin Korda gives his damning verdict

Having spent a fair amount of time playing the BETA code, I was preparing myself for the possibility that *Renegade* would be a real stinker. While some of the qualms I had with that version have been tidied up, there's still far too much wrong with *Renegade* for it to warrant my affections. Yes it's vaguely entertaining in an arcadey kind of way, and had it come out when it was supposed to I'm sure I would have rated it far higher than I do now. At times, the AI (which let's face it, is one of the most important aspects of a FPS) is nothing short of abysmal, with vehicles showing a particularly high level of unintelligence and predictability. The bar has risen astronomically over the last few months, with *Aliens Vs Predator 2* and *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault* setting new standards in the genre, and quite frankly *Renegade* doesn't even come close to competing. On the plus side, Westwood has captured the essence of the RTS games extremely well, with vehicles and buildings accurately reproduced, while the incessant action is highly evocative of *Renegade's* strategy counterparts. The waves of attacks from the enemy and the regular back-up from GDI forces does help swell the atmosphere, almost to the point of convincing me that this is an excellent shooter. But not quite. *C&C* fans will enjoy it in parts, but any FPS fan should seriously think twice before spending their cash on this one.



grass is green, Nod wear bright red and the Tiberium looks like fluorescent snot – just how *C&C* should be: garish and distinct rather than realistic and spectacular. Admittedly the engine is hardly what you'd call cutting edge, to which the fact that Westwood had to take out player-controllable aircraft is ample evidence. The overly angular terrain in particular stands out as a sore point, as does the fact that Westwood has yet to grasp the concept that human beings need to move their feet in order to turn on the spot. If I didn't know any better I'd say *Renegade* was using the *Quake II* engine, such as the few graphical features that make any positive impression. On the plus side, there is always plenty going on and even our rapidly ageing Pentium 733s managed to keep up with the pace.

YOU CAN'T PLAY NOD

In terms of the weapons and vehicles, like the rest of the game in fact, you could easily point out that there are better examples of each in a variety of other games. All the weapons are flimsy and unconvincing and one or two next to useless (the grenade launcher being a perfect example). Unlike much of the game, the weapons don't seem to follow the same *C&C* rules; in that you can't take out a tank with a pistol for example. Fair enough, but neither is a rocket launcher particularly effective against a human. Very odd that. But apart from a couple of strange inconsistencies with *C&C* reality, the weapons do their work, and at least it is a typically diverse arsenal, from the auto and sniper rifle to personal ion cannon. Nothing really stands out in isolation however, so let's move on to the vehicles.

Head shots count, otherwise you'll have to wait for the enemy's health meter to go down.



Considering how tight pretty much all the levels are, the vehicles have been worked into the game very well. In most cases they look suitably authentic and move as you would expect (although for that real *C&C* flavour you really shouldn't be able to move and turn at the same time), plus they aren't treated like pithy rewards as vehicles so often are in first-person games. Most important of all is how important the vehicles are to the multiplayer game, specifically *C&C* mode.

MODE WARRIORS

C&C mode is where *Renegade* shines, and when I say it shines, I mean without it we're talking a 60 per cent-ish score. *C&C* mode is the reason why people will buy *Renegade*, and it's the closest we're probably going to get to a real 3D *C&C* battle. How it works is each side has a base, made up of a barracks, Tiberium processor, power plant and vehicle factory, plus the assorted faction-specific gubbins like defences and such. The aim is simple, to get a beacon into the other side's base and call in an Ion or Nuclear strike. The more popular way of winning is to score more points, which usually involves keeping the Tiberium flowing in, revenue from which you can use to buy vehicles, change to a better character and so on. It is arguably the vehicles themselves that make *C&C* mode stand out. *Tribes 2* had them of course – ones that even flew, but they were little more than crude shapes effectively made out of Duplo bricks. Here the battle is on the ground, up close and personal. Unfortunately it's not the full fried breakfast, since you

can't add any new buildings to your base, neither can you destroy the enemy's base beyond making buildings inoperative. Worst of all there isn't anyone taking charge, which kind of makes a mockery of the name *Command & Conquer* mode, since everyone just seems to do what they want.

THE END BIT

Westwood has always said that its aim was to create a game true to its real-time roots; one that fans of the *C&C* arcade strategy games would take to like a GDI hovercraft to water, while at the same time provide enough of a challenge for seasoned first-person purists to enjoy. To that end Westwood has only been partially successful. I can't speak for everyone, but as both a *C&C* fan and someone who has played every first-person shooter ever made (even *South Park*), I can honestly say that I have enjoyed playing *Renegade*

and yet, had I not played it I wouldn't really have missed much. *Renegade* has pace, plenty to do and for *C&C* fans especially it really does bring the *C&C* universe to life, but compared to other first-person shooters it isn't a particularly amazing game. The AI is laughably basic, the graphics unsophisticated, the interface overly complicated and the characters clichéd and wooden. Perhaps the best thing about the game, apart from the multiplayer mode, is that someone saw fit to include the playable demo of *Medal Of Honor* on the disc. However, though it may drive many to buy what is an infinitely more accomplished game, I fear most will be making an exchange before too long rather than parting with more cash. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII-200 MMX Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 100Mb hard drive space, 2Mb 3D accelerator **WE SAY** P450 and 8Mb graphics card should see you right. The game flies on a P600 with 64Mb RAM

IN PERSPECTIVE

Just about worthy of the *C&C* name. Without it, compared to other first-person shooters, *Renegade* just about manages to beat *Red Faction* in terms of enjoyment. *Medal Of Honor* is a much better game in every way.

Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault

Red Faction

C&C: Renegade

Half-Life

Tribes 2



The interface is a bit much – too much information that you don't really need.

PCZ VERDICT

- UPPERS Great multiplayer game • Retains the *C&C* feel (for better or worse) • Massive varied levels with lots to do • Well implemented vehicles • Low technical requirements
- DOWNERS Rudimentary AI • Utterly awful music • Hardly very challenging • Over complicated visual interface

73 Enjoyable gung-ho bollocks

SID MEIER'S SIM GOLF.

★ £34.99 • Electronic Arts • Out March

Keith Pullin only sings while he's swinging

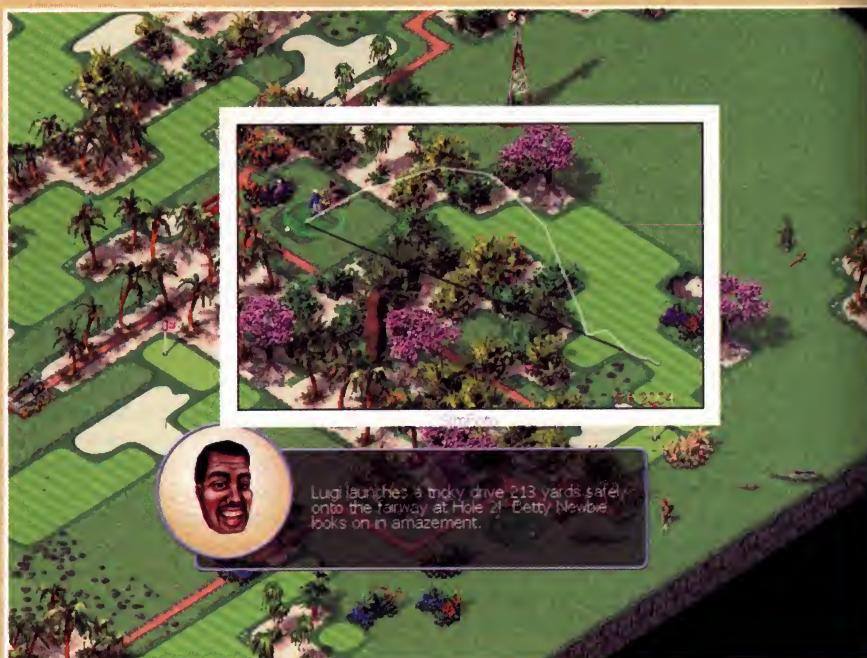
If ever there was a game designer qualified enough to make a seemingly dull and futile hobby accessible to the masses it must surely be Mr Meier. This clean shaven gaming pioneer single-handedly revolutionised the turn-based strategy genre so that *Civilization* now sits proudly as one of the most popular gaming franchises

on the planet. Surely, if he can do it for turn-based strategy, he can do it for golf. Right?

Wrong. OK, first things first – *Sid Meier's Sim Golf* isn't a complete let-down; in fact it's a fairly decent and occasionally humorous (if you like *The Sims*-type humour) game. Trouble is, it has absolutely no longevity. Once you've created a few courses the



Click on each golfer to check what they're thinking. Bart here seems to like rose bushes.



Another one for the photo album. Nice one Luigi.

sudden realisation dawns on you that there's virtually no variety. It's all well and good creating courses and playing them, but where are the *RollerCoaster Tycoon*-type challenges? Non-existent sadly.

What's more, *Sim Golf* has a careless tendency to ignore important details – a fact that's blindingly obvious from the moment you select the first of a possible 16 landscapes

(since when was Stonehenge a tourist attraction in Wales?).

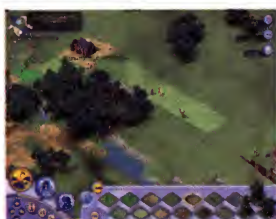
GO WILD IN THE COUNTRY

Viewed using an isometric perspective, *Sim Golf* allows

WALKTHROUGH

NINE HOLES TO GLORY

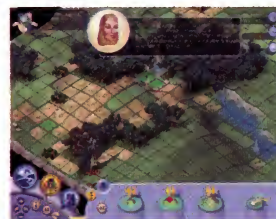
Here's how to turn a potato field into a ton of gold...



1 OK, we'll keep things simple for our first hole. A nice long straight and then a slight dogleg to the left past the barn should provide a decent warm-up. Mind you, bonus points if you hit a cow up the arse...



2 Hole two presents our eager golfers with a mild dilemma. Do they risk a big drive and a possible trip into the bunker and some deadly cat shit, or do they lay up short and go for an iron over the trees?



3 The perfect golf course should provide a selection of secluded areas where golfers can safely go for a piss. This short hole is just the ticket.



4 A winding stream with fairway on either side is perfect for soaking the birthday golfer. Once again – an essential part of any course.

architects to zoom in and out as well as rotate the landscape through four different angles. The blocky appearance of the graphics may not be the pinnacle of technical achievement, but on the plus side there's still a surprising amount of versatility in the layout of courses you can come up with.

You can build daring water holes, ridiculous mountain holes, demanding bunker-ridden links – you can literally let your imagination run wild. The interface is also a cinch to master; just position your tee-box and your flag and then fill in the gap with a crafty combination of fairway tiles, bunkers and trees. In fact, it's surprising just how quickly your uninspiring field is transformed into a bustling little club full of corporate fat cats and bleating sheep.

However, *Sim Golf* is all about ambition and the ultimate tenuous goal is to create the kind of Country Club swanky enough to host the most prestigious

golfing tournaments in the world. So, you need to buy lots of land off the local council and the way you do this is by impressing councillors who come to play your course. In short, if they enjoy their round of golf, they offer to sell you some more land. This means you need to adorn your early holes with plenty of colourful trees, scenic little bridges over streams and maybe the odd stylish landmark or two donated by wealthy heiresses.

CASH COW

The real key to success though is making money, and in *Sim Golf* there are two ways to make cash. The first and most obvious is through green fees. Each golfer pays a certain amount of cash after each hole depending on how

OH, IT'S YOU AGAIN

If you've been missing those loveable Sims then your luck's in.

One of the more peculiar aspects of *Sim Golf* is the way golfers have conversations during the round. If they're enjoying themselves then their conversation ends happily and you get extra cash. If your course is boring then their conversation peters out and you get nothing. So, it pays in more ways than one to make your course enjoyable.



If everything was priced on how enjoyable they were, how much would you pay for PC ZONE?

“Keeping the miserable moaners happy takes up a huge amount of time – golfers are a complex, fickle bunch with many personality attributes to appease”

much they enjoyed it. It may be a slightly unorthodox way to pay for a round of golf (especially when you pay anything up to \$2000 per hole), but there's no denying it's lucrative – too lucrative almost. Large sums of money can be amassed surprisingly quickly and even the most difficult of *Sim Golf*'s four settings struggles to keep you financially challenged for very long.

Winning prize money through tournaments and championships is a further way to swell the coffers. The catch here is that in order to entice the SGA (Sim Golf Association) to hold tournaments, you have to design imaginative and challenging holes. Sadly, for your unskilled local hackers, lengthy, difficult holes are rarely enjoyable. The trick is finding that elusive, magical blend which keeps both your members and the SGA happy.

One way to do this is to encourage your golfers to improve their game. Admittedly their skill will increase automatically each time they make a successful shot, but by purchasing special buildings such as putting greens,

pro shops and driving ranges, you can accelerate that process. Buy these buildings quickly too. Crappy golfers whinging that the course is too hard really start to get on your tits after a while.

CAST IRON BLADDER

Unfortunately all this is easier said than done. Keeping these miserable moaners happy takes up a huge amount of time – golfers are a complex, fickle bunch with many personality attributes to appease. If a golfer gets too angry then there's a pretty good chance they'll lose the plot entirely. While amusing to watch as it often involves wrapping their club around a tree trunk or chucking their clubs into a nearby lake, it does tend to upset the other golfers. The only way to deal with these trouble-makers is to get your warden to throw them out before a full-scale riot erupts.

Golfers are also constantly thirsty, so unless you employ an army of drink sellers and strategically place them between holes, players will simply walk out. Interestingly, this particular



④ Apparently it's the best course he's ever played. This guy obviously doesn't play much golf.



5 Always put uphill holes near the start of your course as it reduces the chances of whomever you're playing with moaning that they're simply far too tired to make it up there.



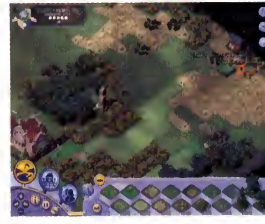
6 This long downhill par 5 offers the chance to take some pot shots at sheep. Having the opportunity to release your anger upon the local wildlife is an integral part of successful golf course design.



7 Hole seven is our killer hole. Do you play it short of the stream or attempt a heroic drive straight over the top? In the end it doesn't matter – either way will end in tears.



8 After the trials and tribulations of the previous seven holes, hole eight is where you get to chill out and smoke that spliff you made while in the woods at the third.



9 And finally we head slowly down the ninth towards the clubhouse and a bacon and sausage sandwich with mayonnaise, ketchup and brown sauce... Golf doesn't get any better than that.

END

“While *Sim Golf* may have the fundamentals of golf in place, it certainly doesn't have the spirit. Where's the rain? Where's the wind?”

← breed of golfer must also possess some kind of superbladder because there are no toilets at all in the game. Their incredible ability to hold it in is made all the more impressive by the fact that for some reason it takes about five years of game time to play a full 18-hole course.

Why time passes this quickly (or slowly depending on which way you look at) is a complete mystery. Of course, it also means that a tournament starting in 2002 will actually end in 2007. Very strange.

PLAYTIME

Playing the courses you design with your own Simgolfer is by far the strongest element of the game. There's also a surprising amount of skill involved in doing so. You can put backspin on the ball, draw and fade it and even play little punch shots from under trees. You always feel like you're in control, which is



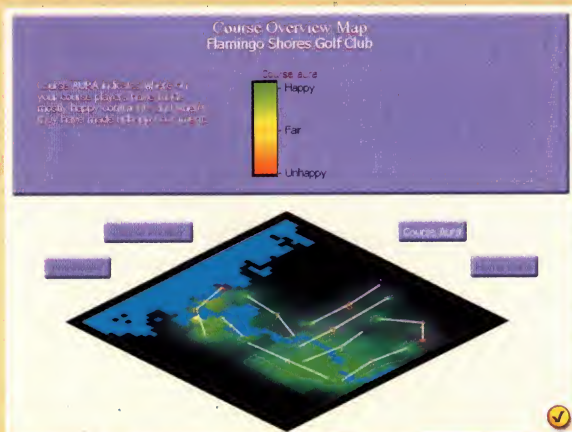
Some Sims chat about a fish. Another chap moans about bunkers. Chuck them all out.



Celeb's homes on your course makes the golfers happy. Nouse sods.



Game on! A local pro challenges us to a round.



The course aura shows what part of the course golfers are saddest in.

amazing considering how crude the graphics are. There's even a

basic, yet effective, RPG element to your character. Like the other computer-controlled golfers on the course, your skills improve whenever you pull off a good shot, so the more games you play (you are often challenged by other players) the better you become. You can even specialise in particular shots by loading up the skill points awarded for good play in one particular area such as high backspin.

ALL MINE

On top of everything the physics seem to work perfectly. Balls do everything you would expect them to; if there's a hill – they roll down it, if there's a bunker – they stop dead. Basically, the course you design always plays as you hoped and intended it would – and that's no mean feat.

The biggest thrill of all though, is winning a major SGA tournament on a course of your



Before your first round, adjust your skill attributes to your liking.

own making. While the financial reward is fantastic and will doubtless help you buy another, more expensive plot of land in another part of the world, it is nothing compared to the true feeling that you have totally and utterly earned your victory.

SHANKED IT

While *Sim Golf* may have the fundamentals of golf in place, it certainly doesn't have the spirit. Where's the rain? Where's the wind? And where's freezing your nuts off on a bleak winter's morning waiting for the fog to clear just enough so that you can drive off?

Even simple details like players getting thirstier on a blisteringly hot day would have helped. Instead we've got Mortimer Goth and Bob Newbie wandering around talking about alien visitations, farting and wearing women's underwear. How does this enhance the game's enjoyment? Answer: It doesn't. To be brutally honest there's more atmosphere inside a thermos flask than there is in *Sim Golf*.

We'd love to say that *Sim Golf* does for golf course design what *RollerCoaster Tycoon* did for

rollercoaster design, but it simply isn't in the same league. OK, it's undoubtedly the most playable game of its kind, and it's certainly a lot better than sitting around cleaning your balls. But, unlike *RollerCoaster Tycoon*, it isn't going to win any new friends, and those it does win will disappear come spring when we cast aside our winter woolies and the true golfing action begins.

TECH SPECS

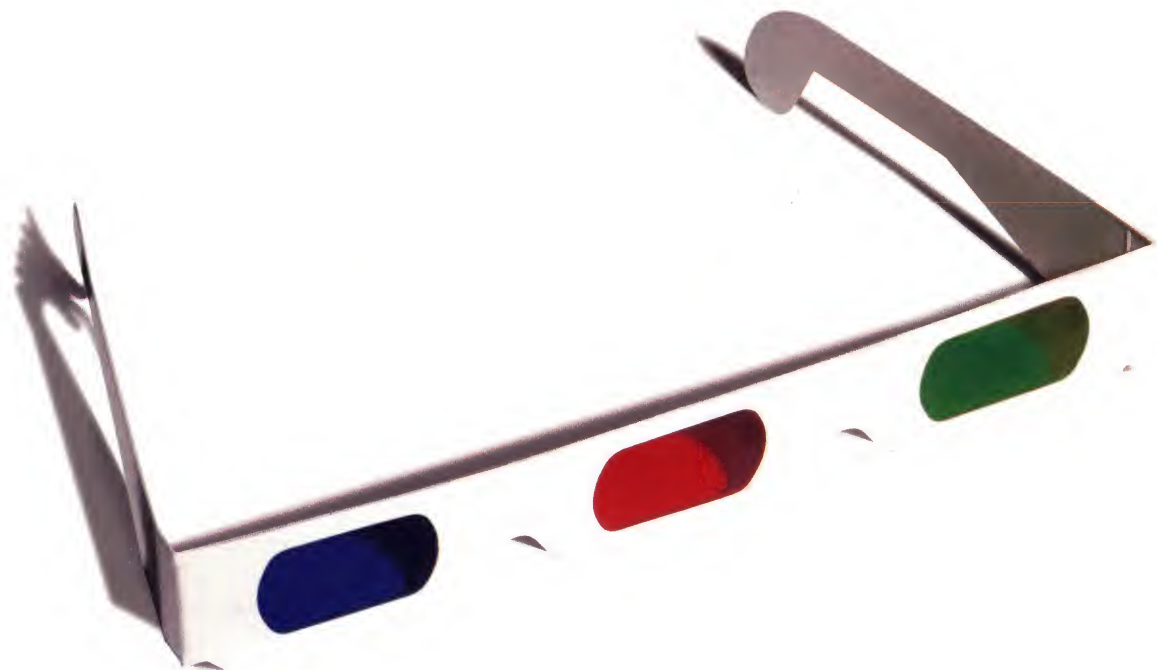
MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII-400
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
300Mb HD Space, any 3D graphics card **WE SAY** Any PIII with 128Mb RAM, 300Mb HD space and 16Mb graphics card

PCZ VERDICT

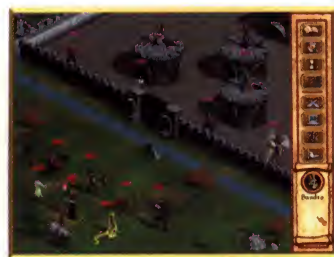
- UPPERS Can play on the course you designed • Your character improves with practice • 16 different landscapes
- DOWNERS Poor graphics and sound • No real challenges • Lacks longevity • Sims are annoying • Lacks detail

65 Hit and miss

THE NEXT DIMENSION



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SALT LAKE 2002

★ £29.99 • Eidos Interactive • Out now

Sick of winter yet? Steve Hill freezes his nuts off



Ⓜ Initial ticket sales were disappointing.

authentic branding to the BBC commentary team. Ultimately, the action is all that matters though, and it goes like this.

Men's Alpine Skiing Downhill: not bad at all, it involves racing against the clock through a series of gates. Often exceeding 80mph, it manages to convey a reasonable sense of speed, particularly when you become airborne, and is especially terrifying in first-person mode, accompanied by the guttural sounds of your skier breathing.

Men's Snowboard Parallel Giant Slalom: anyone who has ever graced the slopes will be all too aware of the absurd snobbery that exists between skiers and snowboarders, as if there is a moral superiority in sliding down a frozen mountain on two thin sticks as opposed to a single phat one. Thankfully, boarding has now been accepted as an Olympic sport, as reflected here. It's pretty basic fare

compared to the extravagant snowboarding console games, an inevitable consequence of taking a documentary approach. It's perfectly playable though, and sees you go head to head with a competitor over two heats, with victory going to the man with the lowest combined time. It can be fairly tense, and if you see your opponent loom into view, it's time to up the pace, at the risk of missing a gate and being disqualified.

GOING FOR GOLD

Ladies' Alpine Skiing Slalom: a change of pace from the men's event, this has loads of small gates situated close together, necessitating a 180-degree turn before each one, something that requires rhythm and precision timing. Can be frustrating.

Men's Ski Jumping K120 Individual: probably the first time such an event has been replicated, and for good reason.

As those who read last month's entertaining and informative preview will be aware, this is of course the official video game of the Olympic Winter Games. Eidos have an exclusive six-year agreement with the International Olympic Committee and they're going to use it. Following the solid debut of *Sydney 2000*, the action moves to the considerably colder climes of Salt Lake, home to the games that will be hitting your televisions any time soon. What do you mean, you didn't know? Haven't you been feverishly counting the days until the action starts? Won't you be setting your alarm for the heats of the Ladies' Luge?



the most sport-obsessed insomniacs, particularly as we no longer have the likes of Torvill and Dean to bring home the Gold for

features six events culled from the Winter Olympics, all naturally replicated to within a snowflake of the real thing. The latest advances in motion capture and satellite technology have all been utilised to create a game that bears a freak resemblance to the television coverage, with the key difference that you get to press a few buttons while watching it. Back in the day, games were about invention and imagination; nowadays it seems to be enough to simply copy the telly. It's well done though, and while we can't vouch for the exact televisual likeness at the time of writing, it does carry all the hallmarks of 'official product,' from the

“Bears a freak resemblance to the TV coverage, with the key difference that you get to press buttons while watching it”

Probably not. It is admittedly difficult to get too excited about an event that is mainly screened in the dead of night and which involves people you've never heard of doing things you don't understand. And that's just the Adult Channel. As for the Winter Olympics, it tends to elicit a disinterested shrug from all but

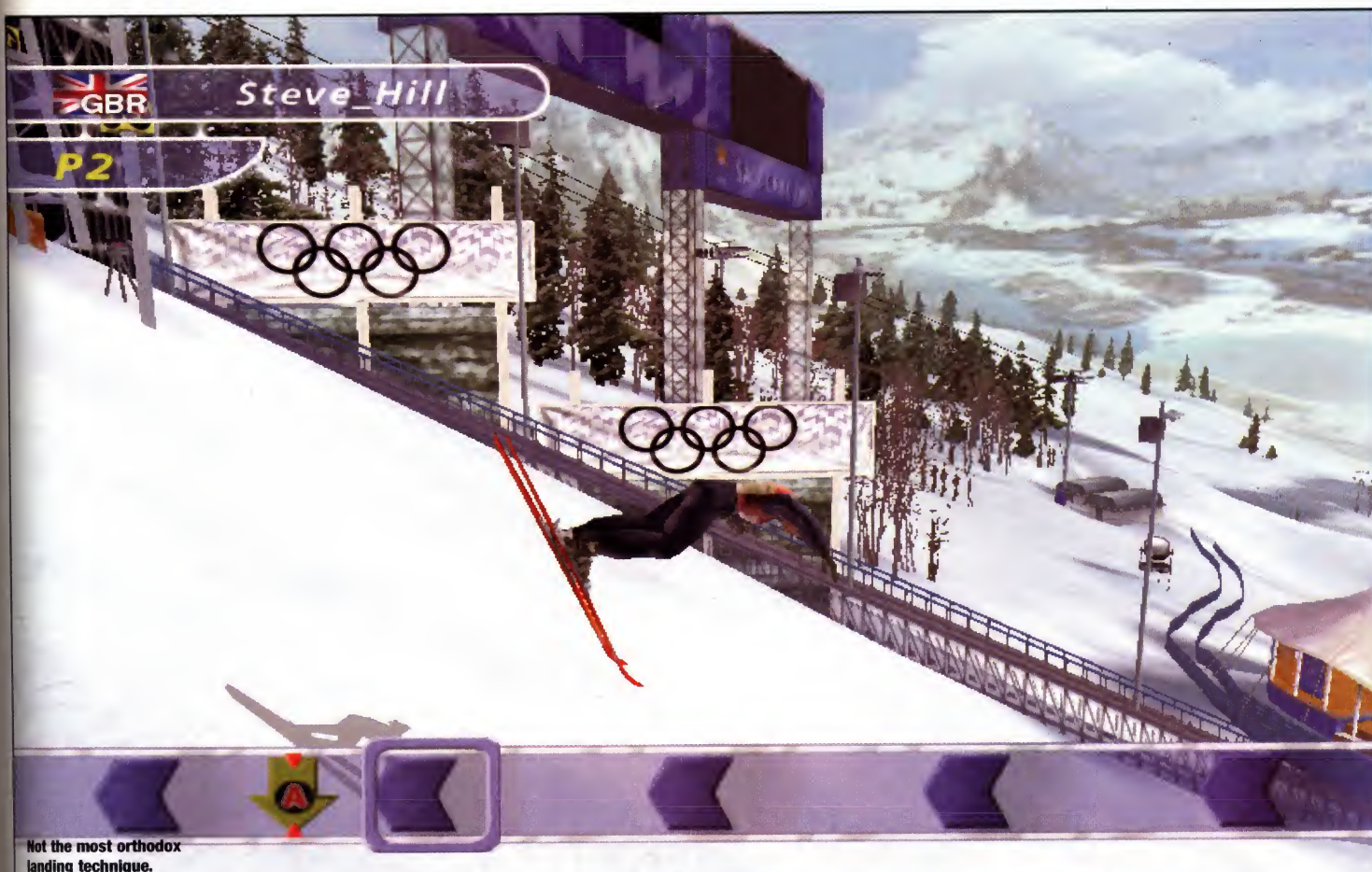
Great Britain. Forever in the shadow of the 'proper' summer Olympics, it doesn't have quite the same cachet. Like the Worthington Cup compared to the FA Cup, it's good but it's not right.

UTAH SAINTS

But we digress. There's a game that needs reviewing and it



Ⓜ No need for a new trophy cabinet just yet.



Not the most orthodox landing technique.



Now that's what you call a slalom course.



Not the most interactive of experiences, it simply involves setting off when the wind drops, pressing a button at take-off, gliding for a bit, straightening your skis and landing. Mildly satisfying if you get it right, but by no means a deal-breaker.

Women's Freestyle Skiing Aerials: this is possibly even

more absurd, this simply requires pressing buttons on command. Get it right and your skier will perform the requisite stunts, although you don't really see her as you're concentrating on the instructions at the bottom of the screen. You might as well train a monkey to do it.

Men's Two-Man Bobsleigh: they didn't think it could be done, and they were half right. Requires vigorous button-bashing to pick up speed, timing to jump into the sleigh, and then adroit steering to stay on the racing line without overdoing it and risking decapitation. Perversely playable.

That's your lot then, and with only six events it does tend to be over quite quickly, although four different game modes do add some variety. It's undeniably a polished affair, and with a vast leap of imagination you can almost convince yourself that you're competing for Gold. Or you could just put the telly on. **P2**

WALKTHROUGH

BOB-A-JOB

Learn how to bobsleigh in three easy steps



1 Don't just look at it, get pushing, go on.



2 You're not going to win any medals at 14mph.



3 That's more like it. Now take the next left.

IN PERSPECTIVE

In the absence of any other Winter Olympics title, the only real comparison is with skiing and snowboarding games – not really the PC's forte. But if it's the Olympic vibe you're after, then *Sydney 2000* should do the trick.

Salt Lake 2002

Supreme Snowboarding

Sydney 2000

Ski Racing

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PIII 450
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
8Mb 3D accelerated card **WE SAY**
Ideally, a P800 with 128Mb RAM and
a 32Mb 3D card

PCZ VERDICT

- UPPERS** High production values • Extremely authentic • Some surprisingly good events
- DOWNERS** Only six events • Two of which are lame

68 Fool's Gold

STAR TREK: ARMADA II



★ £29.99 • Activision • Out now

Mark Hill goes where countless have gone before and reviews a completely pointless sequel

One day the games industry will be ruled by visionaries willing to throw big bucks at original ideas and create the same sort of atmosphere that Hollywood had in the '70s, when it encouraged the likes of Scorsese and Coppola to make their masterpieces. For now, though, we live in the age of *Rush Hour 2*, *Hear'Say* and *Armada II*. The original may have gone deservedly unnoticed over here, but in the US it was a big enough hit to ensure a cheap and quick remake was promptly knocked off the Activision assembly line. Not that I didn't find *Armada I* vaguely enjoyable, it's just that I wouldn't want to play it again. And that is exactly what you are expected to do. It's the gaming version of Spot The Difference.

BORG AGAIN

So it's a real-time strategy set in the *Next Gen* universe and played over a flat map pretending to be space. So you collect resources and build ships as you make your way through the nicely boxed-up campaigns. So yet again, you have to defeat the Borg from assimilating everyone. Would you like some fries with that?

Of course, I'm pissing into the wind here. It's already sold

another warehouse load of copies in the States and filled entire message boards with praise, but at least I can wave an angry fist here and hope to provoke some insulting letters to Feedback.

"The all-new singing and dancing tactical view lets you command your ships in 3D!" they'll cry with indignation. "But it's less than useless," I'll retort. Besides there's no excuse for the presentation being worse, the graphics being no better and the story – the real saving grace of *Armada I* – being crap. The ships still look like cardboard when they explode and there is so little strategy to speak of you wonder how they get away with having an 's' in their RTS. The hackneyed formula of collecting resources and building units has been blasted out of the water by more sophisticated titles in recent times. The fact that this is supposed to be set in vast and wondrous outer space just makes the whole thing even more ridiculous.

Of course there are loads of small additions that will have fans of the original weeping into their warp drives. But ask yourselves this: when was the last time you saw Picard spend half an episode overseeing the construction of an Orbital Processing Facility? [X]

IN PERSPECTIVE

Games don't have souls but, if they did, this franchise would be soulless. *Dominion Wars* is slightly more tactical and *Homeworld* is proper 3D.

Star Trek: Armada

Star Trek: Armada II

Dominion Wars

Homeworld: Cataclysm

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P300
Memory 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** You'll need at least a PIII 450 with tons of memory if you're thinking of going multiplayer

PCZ VERDICT

- UPPERS Patrick Stewart's voice • Pretty colours
- DOWNERS Total lack of originality • Cluttered screen • Useless new tactical view • Poor AI

52 Seen it all before



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① The map-editor is much better when it doesn't need a Russian dictionary.



② Many missions revolve around defending small areas against large forces.



③ The computer AI is as difficult as ever on some missions.



④ There's not much time to stand around.



⑤ Into the valley of death.

COSSACKS: THE ART OF WAR

★ £19.99 • CDV • Out now

The art of reviewing an add-on. By *Rhianna Pratchett*



IN PERSPECTIVE

While not taking in as much of an epic time span as *Empire Earth*, *Cossacks: The Art Of War* does exceed the title in terms of gameplay and strategy. *Age Of Kings: The Conquerors* is more for those who prefer their battles small and simple, while *Civilization III* is an essential title for all turn-based strategy fans.

Empire Earth

Civilization III

Cossacks: The Art Of War

Age Of Kings: The Conquerors

Cossacks: *European Wars* was one of the surprise RTS successes of last year, turning historical warfare into an art form. Big, beautiful and imbued with more history than a retired general's bedtime reading, it gave us vast numbers of troops to manipulate and send to their deaths by the thousand. An expansion was

of their fans. Most areas within the game have been addressed and not only does the expansion contain plenty of new campaigns and missions but also lots of extras such as global rankings, alliances with AI nations and the ability to give orders while paused.

HELPSKI

Art Of War also comes with a full map and scenario editor, which

“Art Of War comes with a full map-editor, which was in the original *Cossacks*, but only in its original Russian form”

pretty much inevitable after it reached the number one slot in the charts, before being knocked off by *Black & White*.

The developers have undoubtedly taken the safe road with *Art Of War*, by actually paying attention to the clamorings and mutterings from various *Cossacks* forums, and have tried as much as possible to incorporate the wishes

was in the original *Cossacks*, but only in its original Russian form, something of a hindrance to the vast majority of English-speaking people. This is the perfect way to make the most of the new textures and scenery extras, and it's great for creating your own scenarios and battles and allowing you to make the most of the new peacetime mode. This

mode allows you to set territorial boundaries which cause instant death when crossed within a certain time frame, and it helps do away with rush tactics.

HUUUUUUUGE

The maps are huge, 16 times bigger than the original ones to be precise, and at the largest size it takes the slowest unit 1hr 40mins to cross it from corner to corner. In fact *The Art Of War* in general seems to be geared towards longer lasting battles, even the missions often see you controlling a small number of forces and banging away at some huge fortress for hours.

This style of gameplay, as with the original, might not be to the taste of every RTS fan. To call it a purist's strategy game would perhaps be a little snobbish, but it certainly remains one of the most detailed and realistic (in terms of economy and scope) around at the moment. Although it may not offer an answer to all your *Cossacks*

woes, simply because at the end of the day you're playing within the constraints of the game against a computer with limited AI and not a free-acting, free-thinking human, *The Art Of War* is still a solid, comprehensive follow up to a great game. [A]

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
Original game **WE SAY** P500 and
128Mb RAM

PCZ VERDICT

① **UPPERS** Packed full of new stuff • Gives the fans what they want • Good value

② **DOWNERS** Missions can be very time consuming • AI still frustrating in places

83 The epic just got bigger and better

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEASON 2001/2002

£29.99 • Take 2 • Out now

Steve Hill swaps non-league for Champions League, and finds little difference



We're told that it's the greatest club competition in the world, and there's no denying that

it can ease the pain of a bleak mid-winter evening, despite the incessant ramblings of Ron Atkinson. ITV's dream team of Big Ron and Clive Tyldesley are nowhere to be heard here, replaced by the random triumvirate of Gaby Logan (née Yorath), Guy 'Melton' Mowbray, and Barry Venison, a man for whom fashion is a foreign country. Mowbray is the main man on the mike, Venison chips in with inane observations, and Logan introduces the action. On paper, Gaby is the perfect woman: intelligent, beautiful, likes

football. She even looked at me once. However, within the confines of a videogame, she's little more than a footnote, and certainly not a reason to buy it.

To be brutally honest, you'd be hard pressed to find any reason to buy this. It is, of course, pony. The Silicon Dreams football game has been through many guises over the years. *World League Soccer* failed to ignite the crowd, an ill-fated Michael Owen endorsement couldn't lift it out of the mire, and the last few releases has seen it carry the Champions League licence. More accurately, the licence has carried the game, and unsurprisingly the same applies this time round, despite the change of publisher. Eidos' loss is Take 2's pain.



ⓐ All of the season's teams are included.



ⓑ AI is ropery at best.

CHUMP MANAGER

A murky affair already, this year's model sees it steal some of the worst ideas from some of the worst games. The golf game-style set pieces are straight out of *Viva Football*, and the elaborate tricks mimic the worst excesses of the *FIFA* series. *UCL* brings a few innovations to the party though, including the introduction of the optional auto-manage feature, whereby the computer selects a team and formation in accordance with your opposition. It's a welcome addition, although mainly because the tactics screen is so unwieldy as to be barely usable.

Naturally, the authenticity is the key selling point, and all of the relevant stadia have been lovingly recreated. On the pitch though, the players display limited intelligence at best. For instance, during the course of this review an attacker situated on the opposition's goal line elected

to pass the ball back to a teammate. A selfless strategy maybe, but not a particularly successful

one. Movement off the ball is scarce, passing is sketchy, and overall it's a mainly leaden experience. It is possible to string a few games together if you really try, but it still falls a long way short of compelling. **PCZ**

IN PERSPECTIVE

It's a sad fact that the PC still can't produce a football game worthy of the name, shamed by the PS2's mighty *Pro Evolution Soccer*. Not since *Sensible World Of Soccer* has there been a genuinely gripping game, and if you believe the purists, that was a pale imitation of the Amiga version. *UEFA Champions League Season 2000/2001* does nothing to buck the trend, and if anything makes *FIFA* look good.

FIFA Football 2002

UEFA Champions League Season 200/2001

European Super League

UEFA Challenge

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PIII 300
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
16Mb 3D card (100 per cent DirectX 8.1-compatible) **WE SAY** PIII 500, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

PCZ VERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Authentic stadia • Real names • Auto-management caters for the idle

⬇ **DOWNERS** Dodgy AI • Shoddy tactics screen • Mowbray keeps banging on about the weather

52 Waste of a licence



ⓐ Banana, just out of shot.

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batteries. So really, the only thing holding you back is your opponent's knee.

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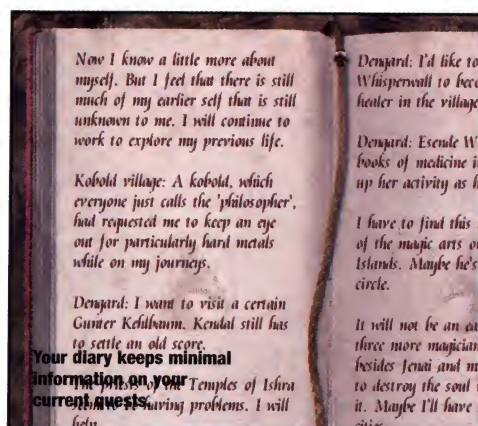


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GORASUL

£29.99 • JoWood • Out now

The latest pretender to *Baldur's Gate 2*'s RPG crown has just arrived. *Chris Anderson* approaches with caution

There are two ways to make a game that heavily 'emulates' one of its rivals in the genre. The first is to take the best elements from the game you are paying homage to and add several new features of your own.

The second way is to simply rip it off hook, line and sinker and change the name and storyline a bit so nobody knows what you've done. *Gorasul* falls somewhere in the middle of these two approaches. The gameplay is distinctly *Balder*-esque in nature,

from the locations which are heavily populated with NPCs you can converse with right down to the combat. It's best played out in a pseudo-real-time manner in which you press the space bar after giving commands to your party, and then watch them go to it when you unpause the action.

Where *Gorasul* veers slightly away from the *BG* camp is in its use of 'special' scenes, such as the one where you have to save a



patch (you can get this on the website listed on this page – make sure you get the English version) but some bugs do still remain. More annoying still are the many grammatical and spelling errors in the text throughout the game. You're hardly likely to suspend your

– check on the website to see if they've done this before buying (as we go to press this patch has yet to materialise).

Graphically *Gorasul* is never going to win any awards. While visuals aren't particularly important in an RPG, we have all been spoiled by the beautiful, crisp character and location graphics in *BG2*, and to settle for *Gorasul*'s washed out and dated graphic style is a bit much to ask of today's discerning RPG buff. If you can overlook the dated graphics and comedy conversational text, there's a good game to be found here. Just don't go expecting *BG2* or you're in for a big disappointment. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 350
Memory 64Mb **WE SAY** It slowed down a little with 256 megs of RAM, so you can bet 64 megs will never be enough

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Upgradeable weapon that levels at the same pace you do •

Customisable gameplay (quest the whole time if you like, fight the whole time, or do a mixture of both)

DOWNERS Crashes • Poorly translated text • Dated presentation

58 It's not *Baldur's Gate 2*, no matter how much it wishes it was



“If you can overlook the dated graphics and comedy conversational text, there's a good game to be found here”

village from undead and you are tasked with strategically placing the villagers before battle, and then taking part in the battle itself. Another new concept is the inclusion of a weapon which levels up in the same way you do. You can even distribute experience points to your weapon and control how it develops as you play the game. These are both nice touches, and it has to be said that *Gorasul* deserves to succeed since the designers clearly put a lot of thought into keeping the game interesting over long periods of time. Sadly, the general impression you will get from *Gorasul* is less than favourable. This is why...

CRASH!

There are several game-stopping bugs in the game. It's not so bad since the release of the 1.04

disbelief when reading conversational scripts that are badly translated from German, though they do provide the odd moment of hilarity in places where the interpreter completely misconstrued the original text and converted it into pure nonsense. Developers Silver Style say they are working on a patch to fix this

IN PERSPECTIVE

BG2 remains the benchmark for the fantasy RPG genre. *Planescape: Torment* remains the benchmark for everything else. *Gorasul* remains the benchmark for distinctly average copycat RPGs.

Gorasul

Baldur's Gate 2

Planescape: Torment

ROCK MANAGER

★ £24.99 • Mindscape • Out March

"Mr Writer, why don't you just tell it just like it is?"

Richie Shoemaker does just that

Everyone ends up in a band at some point in their lives – in my case it was after leaving school. Few of us however end up anywhere near the lower reaches of the Indie Top 100. For me the dream of ever snorting cocaine from a nubile young groupie's cleavage ended when the lead guitarist's dog ate the spongy bit on the end of the microphone and in doing so turned our Cure-meets-Mock Turtles rock combo into an instrumental outfit. We never recovered and The Wintermixtures were no more. I retreated to university a broken man, sold my axe for £50 and spent the money on beer. The only remaining evidence of my designs for world rock domination are a couple of TDK tapes and a bundle of hastily written lyrics chronicling my adolescent angst. As much as I would love to get the lads back together for one last crack, I have been completely put off by playing *Rock Manager*.

As its title suggests, *Rock Manager* is all about managing rather than actually doing much rocking, with you licensing and recording songs, keeping your wannabe stars

happy, arranging gigs, bribing magazines for good reviews (it happens, apparently) and booking world tours. However, much as it sounds like it could and should make for a great game, *Rock Manager* is far too wrapped up in its own deluded world of wackiness to actually provide much in the way of meaningful entertainment, with all the effort expended in making it seemingly spent on trying (and utterly failing) to be funny.

MAMA WEER ALL CRAZEE, NOT

No risk of spontaneous side-splitting unless you're a close friend of the developers then, but even underneath the caricatures and outrageous stereotyping there isn't much of a game. Eight missions are all you get, all of which require you to piss away money on getting a song to the top of the charts – realistic perhaps, but really quite boring in the sense that all you're effectively doing is playing keepy-uppies until you win or run out of money.

The one interesting, yet far from redeeming, feature is that you can mix your own songs by adding instruments or effects to certain tracks, which is vaguely enjoyable, until you realise that what often sounds best works out worst for you in the game. Having been a fan of the equally poor *Rockstar Ate My Hamster* some years ago I was morbidly curious about this game. It is pretty much the same thing underneath the charmless graphics, and though I wasn't expecting to have my world rocked, I thought I would be mildly tickled. As it is I would suggest avoiding this game if at all possible. And if you do have designs on rock stardom, remember to keep any household pets away from your equipment, hamsters included. [F]

☹ "Save all your kisses for me" etc, etc.

IN PERSPECTIVE

If you're looking for the definitive rock star management game on PC, then there's only one choice – don't bother.

Rock Manager

Rockstar Ate My Hamster (ST/Amiga)

Popstar Maker (PSX)

Music 2000

TECH SPECS

REQUIRES Processor PII-233MHz MMX
Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
100Mb hard drive space **WE SAY** It runs fine on our P4 2.2GHz machines

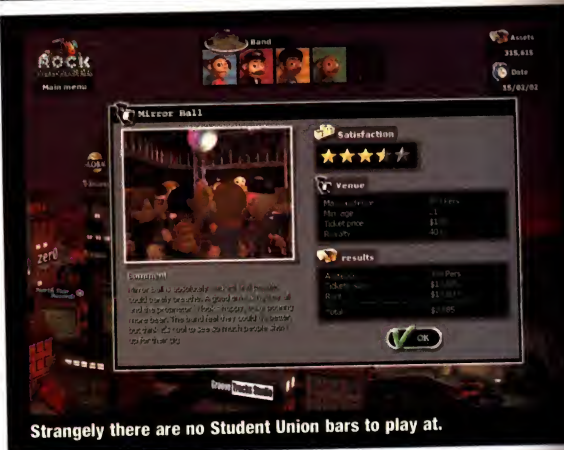
PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS There's nothing else like it on PC

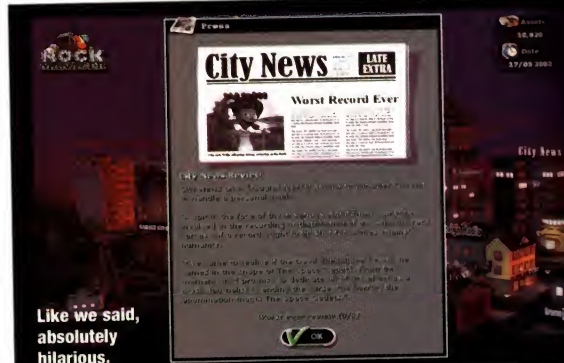
DOWNERS Completely without charm or humour • Not very entertaining

25 Never mind, it's bollocks

Mix your own songs. It's not as good as it sounds – and it doesn't sound very good either.



Strangely there are no Student Union bars to play at.



Like we said, absolutely hilarious.



We're rocking now.

ONLINEZONE

PC GAMING FOR THE MASSES www.pczone.co.uk #13 MAR 2002

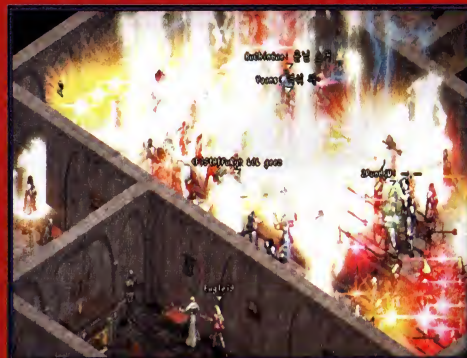
BETA TEST PREVIEW

GLOBAL OPERATIONS

Is it the end of the beginning for Counter-Strike, or the beginning of the end?

demoman commando recon heavyweapons medic

PLUS REVIEWS OF: SKY SPORTS FOOTBALL MANAGER, GHOST RECON AND LINEAGE: THE BLOOD PLEDGE



THE END



Hello and welcome to the last edition of Online Zone. Am I sad? Not at all. Over the last year and a half we have strived to bring you the best in online gaming, from previews of the big and not so big in multiplayer gaming, to reviews of the best in third-party mods for games such as *Half-Life* and *Quake III Arena*. I think we've done rather well and while it may

sound like we've given up on the whole idea of multiplayer gaming, I can assure you that is far from being the case.

Online Zone was designed to help usher in online gaming at a time when broadband was a promise for the future. Today it's a reality and almost every game ships with online components. We believe that online gaming is now part of the mainstream and as such we're integrating our online coverage back into the magazine proper, which we feel underlines the emergence and importance of the genre.

So from next issue until further notice all the latest online games news will be in the Bulletin section, previews will be in the Previews section, and, reviews will be... you get the idea. It makes sense when you think about it. And before you ask what's happening with all our mod reviews, never fear, mods will be a regular part of our bigger and better Extended Play section, and you'll find all the best and biggest releases on our CDs and new DVD. See you next month on another page.

Richie Shoemaker
Online Editor

CONTENTS

YOUR ONLINE GUIDE STARTS HERE

88 GLOBAL OPERATIONS
Counter-Strike is under attack

92 SKY SPORTS FOOTBALL MANAGER
More online football management

94 GHOST RECON
Somewhere over the rainbow

95 LINEAGE: THE BLOODPLEDGE
It's the world's biggest online RPG

96 D-DAY NORMANDY
Lest we forget *Quake II*

96 COMBAT QIII ARENA
The Atari classic gets the *Quake* treatment

97 CHEMICAL EXISTENCE
Great-single player add-on for *HL*

92 PAC-UT
The Man is back for *Unreal Tournament*

HOW WE SCORE ONLINE GAMES

You'll notice our Online scores are out of five. This is partly to avoid confusion with scores in the main PC ZONE reviews section and partly so we don't have to decide between giving a mod 63 or 64 per cent, plus it looks nice. Five stars means great, and one doesn't. It's pretty simple really.



Beer isn't the only tasty weapon on offer.

GORE BLIMEY

Innovative indie FPS *Gore* finally finds a home

Independent coding notched up another victory in January, as US publisher DreamCatcher picked up the worldwide publishing rights to online FPS *Gore*. The game has been causing minor ripples on the Net since the first multiplayer test was released last March, followed by a more polished second test last November. Most of the kerfuffle arose from the fact that the game was being created by a completely independent bunch of eager first-timers at their company 4D Rulers, and yet looked good enough to take on ageing online favourites like *UT* and *Quake III*.

Built on an entirely in-house engine, *Gore* is low on graphical

flash but high on playability, beefed-up carnage and innovative tactical features. Some of the crunchy new ingredients in the game include the ability to destroy a wide variety of environmental objects, a stamina gauge depleted by moving, jumping and carrying heavy weapons, and an advanced armour system in which fragments of damaged armour are visibly knocked off, exposing vulnerable flesh beneath.

No local release date has been announced yet, but expect to see it by mid-year, and probably on budget. For more information check out <http://dreamcatcherinteractive.com/gore>.



Forget casting spells – casting metals is the new craze.

JEWEL OF THE DESERT

Make pyramids not war in *A Tale In The Desert*

One of the most innovative MMORPGs ever conceived is nearing completion at US-based developer eGenesis. Currently in heavy beta testing, *A Tale In The Desert* eschews almost every staple of the RPG genre, including weapons and combat of any kind, magic, shops and NPCs. Set in ancient Egypt, the idea of the game is for players to co-operate to build the perfect society, said to be achieved when they have perfected the 'seven

disciplines of man'. The collective completion of extraordinarily complex tasks is required to achieve this, and there will be a mysterious antagonist working against the effort at all times. Even more radically, the game will end once the tasks have been met.

While *ATTD* will clearly only become interesting if sufficient players both subscribe and take it seriously, it could nonetheless spell a revolution for the medium. www.egenesis.com for more.

MIMESIS ONLINE

mi-me-sis (my-mee'-sis) *n.* 1. The representation of aspects of the natural world in literature, art and online games. 2. Shameless imitation

Just as we went to press, and with surprisingly little fanfare, a new futuristic online RPG went live. It's called *Mimesis Online*, it's from Poland, and if we were discussing it over a swift one at the local, we'd probably say it was an *Anarchy Online* wannabe with a bit more emphasis on overarching world narrative. Of course that's an oversimplification, but one that seems to hold up to at least superficial scrutiny. *Mimesis* has the same blend of traditional RPG and cyberpunk elements as *AO*, the same psionic power system in place of magic spells, a similar variety of alien races and creatures and an equally impressive 3D engine.

However, Polish developer Tannhauser Gate is hoping the game will distinguish itself through the

depth and interactivity of its world narrative. A detailed back-story of cosmic cataclysm and uneasy truces between alien races sets the scene, and players are charged with the task of unravelling the secrets of the ancient catastrophe in between whacking each other over the head. The developers have hinted at a story-arc lasting many years, and also promise that each player will have the potential to influence the course of world events. Of course they all say that, don't they?

More significantly, *Mimesis* has effectively become the second of the new wave of sci-fi MMORPGs to go live, narrowly beating out *Neocron* and the countless others scrambling to get in before the market saturates. As we all know, *AO* paid a price for

rushing to secure first place, with buggy early code, leaving *Mimesis* a good chance to capture a slice of the pie. Unfortunately, early reports suggest that this game too might have launched with buggy and unfinished code, the most heinous exclusion being the entire psionic magic system. Tannhauser Gate has assured us that all of this will be sorted by early February.

We'll be investigating the game in greater depth next issue, until which time we recommend you hold off on the whopping 450Mb free download. If you're still curious, you can check out the official website at www.thgate.com/fin/index.php.



Ⓜ Giant spidery things – it just wouldn't be an RPG without them. Though to be fair the creature design does get a lot more interesting than this.



Ⓜ Right, sod this for a joke, I'm off for a curry.



Ⓜ Like *Anarchy Online*, *Mimesis* features psionic attacks and advanced technology, yet can't quite let go of swords. Or beards.



Ⓜ Two races (Human and Hirudon) are currently playable. A third, the Skirros, will be added in due course.



Ⓜ *Mimesis* is a stat-heavy RPG in the classic tradition.

MAX FACTOR

Team Factor – more than just another Counter-Strike-alike?

It looks like just enough time has passed since the world went silly over *Counter-Strike* for the inevitable imitators to begin to queue up at the gates, all wanting a piece of the team-based tactical action. So we've got *Global Ops* shaping up rather nicely, *Conflict: Desert Storm* looking a bit outclassed, and a little game called *Team Factor* sneaking into the ranks almost unnoticed (for more on this phenomenon check out our *Global Ops* beta test on page 88). When we first looked at this game a few months ago it didn't look too special, but we played the latest build recently and were more than pleasantly surprised. Despite several key differences that we'll get into

shortly, *Team Factor* does borrow heavily from *Counter-Strike*, but that's no reason to write it off. For a start, C-S itself was a bit shabby when it first appeared, and has significant weapon balance problems to this day. Besides which, online C-S has largely been ruined by idiots, obsessive types and cheats, so it may be high time we all took a look around at what else is out there.

The most obvious distinguishing point of *Team Factor* is that it has a fully-fledged single-player mode. Twelve stealth-heavy mission scenarios are on offer, taking you through a variety of admittedly over-familiar real-world environments such as Asian jungles, Middle Eastern

villages, Siberian steppes and the Hoover Dam. However, the game will clearly live and die on its online playability, and fortunately there are a few new features to be found there as well. While gameplay still operates around competing teams and level objectives, *Team Factor* features three competing teams – blue NATO forces, red Russian special ops and black-clad independent states. Instead of simple bomb runs and hostage scenarios, each team has different objectives in each level, designed in such a way as to prevent two teams from forming an alliance against the other.

Prague-based developer 7FX has also incorporated an RPG factor into the proceedings, whereby characters continually develop and gain new skills and weapons, with all players' records held on a central database. Four distinct classes (soldier, specialist, scout and sniper) are available to add further depth to this intriguing innovation.

We're off to Prague to visit the developers shortly, so we'll let you know next issue whether *Team Factor*'s unique features have any hope at all of upsetting the competition. Aim your browser at www.teamfactor.com for more.



① Looks like he could use a re-tread.



① The chequered camouflage had seemed silly in the store, but now...



① "Go, go, go!" Oh sorry, wrong game.



① To cater for single-player missions, the levels will have to be much bigger than C-S.



Ⓜ The problem is, who's going to want to be the bad guys?

GUNDAM ONLINE

You know we're gonna mech it somehow...

It has been said that Gundam is the Japanese *Star Wars*. While that's a highly misleading statement, it does convey some of the importance of Japan's longest-running animé, now known around the world as the quintessential mecha series and a space opera spanning many generations. Perhaps *Transformers* meets *Neighbours* is a better description. For the uninitiated, Gundam are humanoid vehicles or Mobile Suits operated by human pilots, doing battle with massive hand weapons like guns and beam sabers. Virtually indestructible, invisible to radar, able to soar through air, sea and space, the Gundam is the ultimate fighting unit!

OK, now that you know all that, you'll no doubt be excited to hear that there's an online game in the works at Japanese developer Dimps. Currently going under the mouthful *Universal Century.net Gundam Online*, the game is a third-person MMORPG of truly grand proportions, promising to reproduce the Earth and lunar

territories to scale in an area of space about a million kilometres across. One massive server for the whole world is being promised, on which up to 160,000 people will be able to play simultaneously.

As for the gameplay, expect plenty of mecha battling, as well as all the usual chatting, working and character building of your average RPG. As the website proudly proclaims: 'Unique ways of playing such as "never fighting", "living on a farm", or "never leaving the Antarctic Continent", are available.' Sounds great, and you'll also have the choice of two warring factions, the Earth Federation and the Principality of Zeon, as well as various careers and skill paths.

However, possibly the most surprising thing about the game is that it's actually going to be available in English, as well as Japanese and Korean, though unfortunately there will be no in-game translation system. A release date is yet to be announced, but colonists can find out more at www.universalcenury.net/index_en.html.



Ⓜ There's plenty of out-of-suit action as well as all the cool mecha combat.

MODWATCH

Breaking news in game mods, with your host, **Tony Lamb**

February 2002... how time flies. It seems only yesterday that Santa Claus yet again failed to bring me Cat Deeley like I asked. It's very disappointing, but not entirely a surprise.

No such problems with the FPS modding crowd however, who are still delivering as strongly as ever. At a thumping 140Mb is version 3.3 of *Quake III* mod *Weapons Factory Arena*. Get it from www.weaponsfactoryarena.com. For a more reasonable 70Mb is *Acid Arena Q3* which has the craziest colour scheme of any mod yet – so get your dark glasses and grab it from <http://acidarenaweb.free.fr>. Also for *Quake III* is beta 0.87b of *Animal Arena* at www.planetquake.com/animal, adding a variety of 'animal' skills to the more familiar class-based deathmatch. Not to be missed, Threewave has also released a patch up to version 2 for their superb *Threewave CTF* mod. It's only 7Mb, it's at www.threewave.com and it's out now.

Bringing up the *Q3* rear is beta 1.10 of *Reaction Quake 3* which can be found at www.telefragged.com/reaction. It's *Action Quake 2* updated to *Q3* and with more whistles and bells.

Despite *Wolfenstein's* rebirth stealing some of its thunder, *Half-Life* mod *Day Of Defeat* is edging closer to beta 2 with a new online manual at www.dayofdefeatmod.com/info/manual. Make yourself a brew before tackling it 'cos it's a biggie. Looking at *Half-Life* from yet another angle is upcoming single-player mod *POV (Point Of View)*, which casts you as Xonxt, an Alien Slave sent to do the bidding of Nihilanth while avoiding getting wasted by Gordon Freeman. Find it at www.halfifeitalia.com/pov. Also for *Half-Life* is the ever-expanding *Wolverine Spray Site* which is now home to over 1,700 logos as well as handy tutorials on how to use them. Check it out at www.planethalfife.com/wss.

Big news for *UT* fans is the arrival of beta 2.20 of essential *Tactical Ops* mod. The patch is a manageable 25Mb and can be grabbed from <http://tactical-ops.to>. Not to be outdone however, fellow *C-S*-style mod *Strike Force* is approaching version 1.75 and can be seen at <http://strikeforcecenter.com>. Tweaking the taste buds is classic sci-fi homage *UTron* at <http://planetuneal.com/utron> which is nearly ready for release and looks great, so keep watching that page for the first beta.

On the *AvP2* front, the development tools are now available and this should see a rush of mods appearing for the world's scariest FPS. Find them at <http://avp2.sierra.com/downloads>.

Non-FPS gamers aren't left out though, with beta 1 of the *Space: Above And Beyond* mod for *Homeworld* available from www.saab-mod.net, the *Deus Ex* mod list expanding quickly at www.planetdeusex.com, mods for *Red Alert 2* updating at www.planetcnc.com/ra2mod, loads more maps, layouts and other goodies for skateboard fans at www.planettonyhawk.com/downloads/ and still more maps for armchair generals at *Shogun: Total War* fansite www.totalwar.com.



Weapons Factory
Arena still rocks,
now at version 3.3.

Counter-attacking in force

GLOBAL OPERATIONS

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Barking Dog
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE www.globalopsgame.com
OUT March

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Just like *Counter-Strike*, with added class-based play and better graphics
- ★ Real-world missions
- ★ Just enough new features to set it apart
- ★ There should be less cheating than in *CS*



BARKING DOG STUDIOS

This bunch of woofers are based in Vancouver, which is in Canada, next-door to America.

2000 Barking Dog is drafted in to help with Beta 5 of *Counter-Strike* and create a couple of cracking maps in the process. So that's where they got the idea from then.

2001 The Barkies release their first commercial game, the critically acclaimed semi-sequel to *Homeworld*, *Homeworld: Cataclysm*.

2002 As well as *Global Ops* on PC, Barking Dog has console irons in the fire.

Counter-Strike has had it easy so far but will *Global Ops* be a suitable heir? **Richie Shoemaker** takes point to assess its chances

As I write this there are more than 63,000 people playing *Half-Life* across the Internet, 52,000 of which are playing *Counter-Strike*. It is of course the most popular mod, and consequently *Half-Life* is the most fashionable online action game in the world. Compare this to the second most popular, *Unreal Tournament*, with nearly 6,000 players currently fighting across deep space. If you go down the rankings you don't need to be a maths genius to realise there are more people playing *Counter-Strike* than every other first-person shooter and their various mods put together. And the numbers are set to rise, as it's only early evening here, the Americans have yet to join in the action – which isn't surprising after turning up late for two World Wars. (Come back Stan Boardman, all is forgiven – Ed.)

While it's true that *Counter-Strike* can't hope to go on ruling the roost forever, it's hard to see anything dislodging it any time soon. *Medal Of Honor* has a good chance, although you get the feeling it will be

fighting it out for second place with *Wolfenstein*. Then there's Verant's massively multiplayer *Planetside* and its claims of being able to handle hundreds of people playing across the same map (compared to *CS*'s 32). However, none of these are trying to out-*Counter-Strike* *Counter-Strike*, and while we have high hopes that the likes of *Team Factor*, *Mobile Forces* and *Conflict Desert Storm* will all build upon the success that *Counter-Strike* has single-handedly created, spearheading the assault is *Global Ops*, from turncoat developer Barking Dog.

DE_DUST TO DUST

Despite the counter-terrorist versus terrorist battles, *CS* has always felt more like a training exercise, even more so the further you

“A sniper rifle here then does not a sniper make, for in *Global Ops* you must choose your profession”

become acquainted with the handful of maps the majority of players seem to stick to. While that's no bad thing in itself, *Global Ops* aims to up the realism to unprecedented levels by setting its missions throughout the globe. The missions take place not just across dust and tundra, jungle and in villages, but in recognisable hot spots, from Mexico and Quebec – as seen in the recent beta version – to Chechnya, Africa, the Antarctic and Sri Lanka. Moreover the idea for each mission is to create a story around it, partly to

enforce a greater sense of team spirit, partly just because it hasn't really been done before. In Mexico for example, the DEA are chasing South American drug dealers – in Quebec it's rescuing hostages from the Canadian Embassy. Some would

argue that Barking Dog has taken things too far, and while it wouldn't surprise any of us if the first fan-made level to be released is set in the underground caves of Tora Bora, no doubt the developer would have liked to have done it themselves. Seeing as they were pressured into dropping plans for a Northern Ireland mission last year due to pressure from UK gamers, it's a safe bet that controversy will be left at the feet of third-party developers. Like it or not, Northern Ireland will be back in some form, good guys versus bad, Britain versus the IRA, white hats versus black – no matter the shades of grey that colour reality.





COMMAND & CONQUER

Aside from the various maps, there are many more differences between *Global Ops* and *Counter-Strike*. Borrowed from pre-CS top dog *Team Fortress*, instead of simply choosing a weapon, players will be able to select their character from a number of pre-set classes. A sniper rifle here

then does not a sniper make, for in *Global Ops* you must effectively choose your profession, and there are plenty of them. These range from medic and commando to heavy gunner and demolitions expert, all with the various levels of armour, speed and choices of primary and secondary weapons

that you'd expect. One class you won't have seen elsewhere is the intelligence officer and true to his rank, he's the one behind the lines and safe from harm, sitting in front of his command console ordering everyone around.

Though he doesn't get involved in any direct action, the intelligence

officer is an important member of the team, able to see through his team's head-mounted cameras and set waypoints for each to follow. He can also guide reinforcements around the map, since unlike *Counter-Strike*, when you die the war is far from over as players are resurrected and thrown into the fray



➤ The commander can set waypoints for his men.



➤ My gun's bigger. I win.

← on the next reinforcement period, *Wolfenstein*-style.

BOMB BLAST

In terms of the weapons on offer *Global Ops* has more than enough to keep even the most ardent gun nut occupied. There are more than 32 weapons in fact, most of which you'll be familiar with – though with four heavy machine guns, various grenades and explosives, plus a LAW rocket launcher, the battles are sure to be a little more explosive than *Counter-Strike*. One nice little weapon is the tear gas grenade, and unless you have a gas mask, your character will start coughing and spluttering if you run into a cloud of the stuff. Flashbang grenades may well blind you for a short time, and deafen you as well. Best of all are the bomb/defuse missions, where after planting explosives, those trying to defuse can either take their time and make sure it won't go off, or if time is running out, randomly cut one of the wires in the hope it's the right one.

There are dozens of other small touches in the game that ensure most will feel they are in familiar territory, while at the same time playing a different game. The balance of the weapons is noticeably different, as is the damage model, and no doubt there will be plenty of changes as minor defects are ironed out over the coming weeks both before and after release.

MAKING THE SWITCH

After initially disliking the game I soon realised it was only because I had to get used to the new maps and the new features *Global Ops* offers over *Counter-Strike*, but it's obvious there will be many who are reluctant to make the changeover. Some will argue what's the point of paying £30

or £40 to play what is essentially the same free game? It's a fair question. Whether you see *Global Ops* as a blatant copy or a worthwhile purchase will depend on a number of factors, the most important of which is whether you still find as much enjoyment in *Counter-Strike* as you once did. If you do, then why change things? If you're getting sick of the whole terrorists versus special forces theme, then of course you'll be throwing up before even getting the game home. If on the other hand you've been away from *Counter-Strike* because of the rampant cheating going on, then there's a good chance you'll find *Global Ops* a fairly safe hang-out. Barking Dog has



① You can look through a couple of loo rolls.



② "I said no filming."



③ You can buy accessories for most of the weapons.



④ These mushrooms are like... really cool.

SINGLE-PLAYER OPERATIONS

Are these bots hot or not?

While *Global Ops* offers a full single-player campaign, it's only really a linear off-line version of the multiplayer missions, with bots filling the boots of what would otherwise be human players. It's pretty much an off-line training mode and very useful it is too; for one thing it's the best place to learn all the maps, hiding places and sniping positions. Most importantly, you can play around with all the weapons and player classes in the game. The intelligence officer is

certainly one role that needs plenty of practice to get right, especially if you don't want to send your online allies to an early death.

In the preview version of the game we played, the bots did leave a lot to be desired. But it's still early days and considering most of the past couple of months has been spent tweaking the online game, it's not surprising there are still a few bugs. As usual we'll reserve judgement until we see the final game.

made assurances that it will be nearly impossible for people to cheat or even run macros. There's no console for one thing, but it would be wrong to think determined killjoys won't find a way around the security measures.

LITH OR LET LITH

Graphically, as you will probably already be thinking, *Global Ops* is far from spectacular. Though the LithTech engine does a competent job throughout, it lags behind the recent *Quake III*-powered games like



➊ After you, Henry.



➋ Don't worry chaps, I'm right behind you.

STRIKE WHILE THE IRON'S HOT

Global Ops isn't the only one after the *Counter-Strike* crown

TEAM FACTOR (7fx)

To add to the Counter-Style mix of this Czech-developed game, *Team Factor* offers what it calls 'RPG factor', in that you create a unique character by choosing from a number of stats. How different this will feel next to current similar games is unknown, but we hope to bring you a full preview next issue.

TEAM FORTRESS 2 (Valve)

The popular *Quake* mod *Team Fortress* was the first proper team-based multiplayer game and though heavily delayed, there's no doubt the standalone sequel will be one of the biggest online shooters when it arrives. More contemporary than its predecessor and with team classes

and even a commander directing the action, you could be forgiven for thinking it'll end up a clone of *Global Ops*. In fact, this was announced way before *Global Ops* existed.

COUNTER-STRIKE 2 (Valve)

There are very few details available on *Counter-Strike 2* at the moment, aside from the fact it will use the *Team Fortress 2* 3D engine and be better than the original game. For most of us that's all we need to know, but you can bet there will be more varied missions, more weapons and skins and hopefully no cheating. When it does arrive it will rock, there's no doubt about that.

Medal Of Honor and *Wolfenstein*. Next to *CS*, *Global Ops* has a meatier look and while the animation is very good, the graphics look a little washed out.

As a whole though, based on playing the beta online and the recent preview code, *Global Ops* looks like it's shaping up to be a

tactical possibilities than *CS* ever had, and with the many small enhancements (like the class-based play and the Intelligence Officer in particular), there is far greater scope for organised teams. As to whether *Global Ops* ends up beating *Counter-Strike*, both in terms of popularity and in terms of

“The varied missions are welcome, offering many more tactical possibilities than *CS* ever had”

real contender. It's difficult to gauge the game after just a few hours when we've all spent many hundreds playing *Counter-Strike*. Certainly the varied missions are welcome, offering many more

the quality of the game, it will probably be the case that we'll have to wait for a good few months to find out. And don't forget, it took *Counter-Strike* a whole year to take over the world. We'll hopefully have a full review in next month's issue, by which time we'll have a much better idea. **PCW**



➌ Wait for a medic to revive you.

SKY SPORTS FOOTBALL MANAGER

★ £6.99 a month • THQ • Out now • www.nisports.com

When we told Mark Hill we were giving him *Sky Sports* he got very excited. Then he remembered he worked for a game's mag

If there's something that's been missing from online footie management games so far it's the football matches themselves. It's all very well downloading *Play As Manager's* 3D highlights or getting *Soccersim's* long text descriptions, but you never feel as if you're in complete control of your team unless you can make substitutions and tactical changes in response to what's happening on the field. This is where *Sky Sports* hopes to fill

with only the best managers allowed into the upper level. Add to this cash prizes and some decent stats and you'd be forgiven for getting very excited indeed. The problem is that *Sky Sports* wants to attract all the thousands of people who get *Champ Man* to the top of the charts every year while at the same time luring in the millions who are still figuring out what the buttons on their digital remote control do. What this means is that you get a nice and clean interface – not

“The matches themselves are vaguely interesting, opting for a scrolling text which gets repetitive all too quickly”

the gap – at least until *CM4* comes out. Its biggest selling point is that matches are played at a specific time, when the two managers involved log on for some real-time skirmishes which, as anyone who's played *Champ Man* over a network will know, tramples over the experience of playing against an AI manager. A further innovation is the introduction of tiers – bronze, silver and gold –

unlike the Sky TV set-up – with an extremely shallow game.

PRESS THE RED BUTTON

We weren't quite expecting a game of *Championship Manager's* depth, but we did think that a title capable of pulling off live matches would have more to it than *Play As Manager* or the Daily Telegraph's Fantasy League. In its quest for Zen-like purity and

simplicity, *Sky Sports* has stripped the management genre down to basics. This will probably be useful to people who've never played a game in their lives and only log on every other day for 20 minutes. But us Zoners are fevered addicts and megalomaniacs, who want to spend every free minute

tweaking tactics and dabbling in the world transfer market. Not much chance of that happening here. Buying players is slow, boring and not very effective, while tactics are simple and don't leave much room for fine-tuning. Forget about moving players on the tactical pitch to make your own

formations. You can't set up runs, individual marking orders, dribbling, long shots and all those other features we take for granted. This becomes more irritating when you're playing a match, since you're left with very few things to change round if your initial tactics aren't working. In the unlikely event that you're playing against another human being (see side panel), you'll begin to feel that you've both rolled some dice and are waiting for the numbers to show. As for the matches themselves, they're vaguely interesting, opting for a scrolling text which gets repetitive all too quickly. But that's not the worst of it.



① This is the tactics screen, where you won't be spending so much of your time.

SERVER TIME 13:07

LEAGUE TABLES

LIVERPOOL MANAGER: MARK HILL

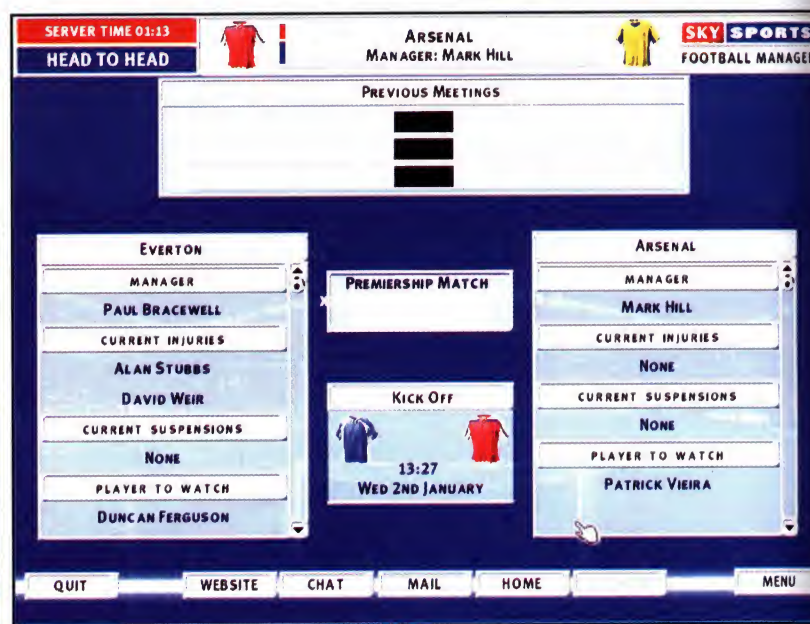
SKY SPORTS FOOTBALL MANAGER

CLUB	PLAYED	W	D	L	F	A	POINTS	FORM
1. MANCHESTER UNITED	22	10	1	1	16	13	31	WWWD
2. LIVERPOOL	23	14	2	5	46	24	40	
3. TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR	23	15	3	5	45	23	48	W
4. WEST HAM UNITED	23	14	5	4	46	25	47	
5. LEEDS UNITED	23	14	4	5	36	18	46	WWWL
6. FULHAM	23	12	3	8	36	35	39	WW
7. ARSENAL	22	10	5	7	36	30	35	WLWLW
8. ASTON VILLA	23	10	4	9	36	43	36	LWLWW
9. NEWCASTLE UNITED	23	10	3	10	34	31	33	
10. SUNDERLAND	23	9	5	9	27	24	32	
11. CHELSEA	23	10	3	10	41	36	31	DLWW
12. CHARLTON ATHLETIC	23	7	7	9	31	32	28	W

TOP GOAL SCORERS WORST DISCIPLINE

QUIT WEBSITE CHAT MAIL HOME STADIUM MENU

② Manager points are allocated in relation to the team you control.



③ For some reason matches never start on time.

SERVER TIME 01:16
FIND PLAYER

ARSENAL
MANAGER: MARK HILL

SKY SPORTS
FOOTBALL MANAGER

SCOUT FOR PLAYER

STATUS: ALL
NATIONALITY: EU ONLY
ATTRIBUTE: ANY

POSITION: CM
SKILL: 70
VALUE: 5M

AGE: 16-35
ABOVE/BELOW
ABOVE/BELOW
ABOVE/BELOW

SEARCH BY NAME

SEARCH

SCOUT

SCOUT AND SEARCH RESULTS

NAME	EU	POS	SKILL	AGE	ATTRIBUTE	CLUB	VALUE
JAMIE REDKNAPP	✓	CM	76	28		LIVERPOOL	£31,350,000
NICKY BUTT	✓	CM	75	27		MAN UTD	£31,350,000
PATRICK VEHRA	✓	CM	86	25		ARSENAL	£30,000,000
STEVE GERRARD	✓	CM	83	21		LIVERPOOL	£30,000,000
ROY KEANE	✓	CM	84	30		MAN UTD	£30,000,000
JOSEPH COLE	✓	CM	79	20		WEST HAM	£29,700,000

QUIT WEBSITE CHAT MAIL HOME STADIUM MENU

Buying players is a boring process unless they're transfer listed, which means they're English and rubbish.

SERVER TIME 01:19
NEWS

ARSENAL
MANAGER: MARK HILL

SKY SPORTS
FOOTBALL MANAGER

PREMIERSHIP

11 DECEMBER 2001 - 2ND JANUARY 2002

G. HOULLIER TAKES REINS AT DERBY COUNTY
DERBY COUNTY HAVE NAMED G. HOULLIER AS THEIR NEW MANAGER.

CHARLTON ATHLETIC HIRE G. ROEDER
G. ROEDER HAS BEEN APPOINTED AS THE NEW MANAGER OF CHARLTON ATHLETIC.

SUNDERLAND NAME A. PREECE AS NEW GATHER
SUNDERLAND HAVE NAMED A. PREECE AS THEIR NEW MANAGER.

D. WATSON IS NEW ASTON VILLA GATHER
D. WATSON IS THE NEW MANAGER OF ASTON VILLA.

IPSWICH TOWN EMPLOY D. GRADIN
D. GRADIN HAS BEEN APPOINTED AS THE NEW MANAGER OF IPSWICH TOWN.

D. O'LEARY TAKES OVER AT NEWCASTLE UNITED
D. O'LEARY IS THE NEW MANAGER OF NEWCASTLE UNITED.

N. WARNOCK APPOINTED CHELSEA BOSS
CHELSEA HAVE NAMED N. WARNOCK AS THEIR NEW MANAGER.

QUIT WEBSITE CHAT MAIL HOME STADIUM MENU

The news page is a merry-go-round of managers joining and leaving clubs.

SERVER TIME 01:45
FIRST TEAM

LIVERPOOL
MANAGER: MARK HILL

SKY SPORTS
FOOTBALL MANAGER

POC NAME

10 MICHAEL OWEN 10

DATE JOINED: 11/12/01
PREVIOUS CLUB: UNKNOWN
FEE PAID: £0,000
CONTRACT ENDS: 16/06/02
VALUE: £35,000,000
ASKING PRICE: £35,000,000

AGE: 22
NATIONALITY: ENGLISH
WEIGHT: 11 ST 0 LBS
HEIGHT: 5 FT 8 IN
POSITION: ST
STATUS: IN CONTRACT

APPEARANCES: 33
GOALS: 18
YELLOW CARDS: 4
RED CARDS: 1
SUSPENSIONS: 1
INJURIES: 0

SKILL: 84
FITNESS: 65
FORM: 65
PASSING: 79
SHOOTING: 88
TACKLING: 45

DRIBBLING: 85
HEADING: 81
SPEED: 90
COMMITMENT: 84
INFLUENCE: 81
SET PLAYS: 73

SELL PLAYER OFFER NEW CONTRACT SACK PLAYER

FORMATION: 4-3-3

QUIT WEBSITE CHAT MAIL HOME STADIUM MENU

The stats are better than most non-CM games and not too confusing either.

IS ANYBODY OUT THERE?

Apparently not...

It may be early days yet, but there is little sign of *Sky Sports* generating the kind of community that *Soccersim* can offer. To make sure everyone gets to manage their favourite team, there are hundreds of worlds to pick from, some of which are played at lunchtimes, others during the evening and others at the weekend. When you start a new game, put in the name of the team you want and a list of five possible worlds with a star rating for its population comes up. Five stars means it's a heavily populated world with most of the teams taken up. Or at least that's what it should mean. In actual fact, it usually means there are around ten people spread out across five divisions. When you take into account that

the most important aspect of the game is the live matches against real opponents, you realise just how big a problem this is. And just because there are ten people in your world don't expect them all to log on every day. You're lucky if your division has more than a couple of people in it during match hours, and even luckier if they're scheduled to play against you. After three weeks hopping worlds to find divisions populated with dedicated players, I managed to play a grand total of four matches against real people, two of which were friendlies set up out of boredom. All of which makes a mockery of the game's slogan, so happily stamped on the box and all over the website: 'You'll never play alone'.

You're given very little solid information to make anything approaching an informed decision about something as simple as a substitution. You're shown each player's score out of ten at half-time but no other stats (passing, tackling and so on), and you can't follow these scores changing during the match anyway.

NO FRIENDS

There are also some bugs that make those matches even more of a chore. There's nothing worse than waiting an hour for the match to start only for it to crash halfway through. You're probably wondering whether it's worth playing at all. The answer is that it depends on what you're after. Die-hard *Champ Man* fans should try the ugly but complex *Soccersim* and forget all about this, but more casual gamers will find something to enjoy if they manage to get enough people playing in their league and logging on regularly. The fact that you're after manager

points to work your way up the game's tiers as well as trying to win matches does add a bit of excitement to the proceedings. On the other hand, unless you have a zippy ADSL connection you can expect some seriously long delays while switching screens or even changing formations. You might as well pay Sky a few more quid a month and watch the real thing. **PC2**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233
Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Get ADSL if you don't want to grow old while you search the transfer market

PCZVERDICT

- UPPERS Nice clean interface • Live matches • Stats are not too shabby
- DOWNERS Far too simple • Not enough people • Matches give very little info

So basic you could play it with a remote control

GHOST RECON

★ £29.99 • Ubi Soft • www.ubi.com

Mark Hill fights it out with other ghosts but finds he's the only one wearing a white sheet

We always knew *Ghost Recon*, while a great single-player game, would come into its own online. And we also knew it was never going to rival *Counter-Strike* for popularity. The tension is probably greater than any other multiplayer game, with the vast open spaces making you feel like a sitting duck most of the time. And after a couple of cases of seeing the world spin round and finding yourself lying in a heap in a pool of your own blood without a clue where the headshot came from, you'll find menace behind every tree, rock and doorway. But this is still a game for the hardcore crowd.

There are enough modes to satisfy everyone though. From the usual deathmatches and

rescue missions to the more interesting co-op missions. The biggest innovation is that you can control a team of bots as you would in the single-player

“You'll find menace behind every tree, rock and doorway”

game against someone else with a team of bots, or go through missions as part of a human squad with a leader.

But you get the feeling that the game hasn't really taken off (while there were up to a thousand players a couple of months ago, the average is well below half of that now) and that most of its innovative features are being left unused. It's hard to find a co-op game where you can go through missions with people on your side, and there's never a sense of having a leader who is drawing up strategies.

I expect the real hardcore ghosts (the ones who set up clans and protect their servers with passwords) do all this and more, but most people are content to be dumped on a map and start shooting.

The various options (respawns or lack of them, arcade mode) can make each

game very different, though I usually found that respawns were set to infinite and people treated it like a quick blast of *Serious Sam*.

As is so often the case, lag is a big problem if all you've

got is a 56k modem, and the demands of the massive environments make this all too obvious. The game is played through Ubi Soft's client software, Ubi.com (not unlike Microsoft's Gaming Zone), which is not ideal but does the job, although the servers do tend to disappear from screen from time to time. You can sometimes spend as much time getting into a game as you do playing it.

Rogue Spear veterans will enjoy it more than those seeking *Counter-Strike*-style thrills, but then Red Storm know what their fans want: realism, one-shot kills and maximum tension.

As long as you have a decent connection, *Ghost Recon* really shines in multiplayer. Even though the game demands a slower and more tactical approach, that does nothing to make it a less exhilarating experience. **[A]**

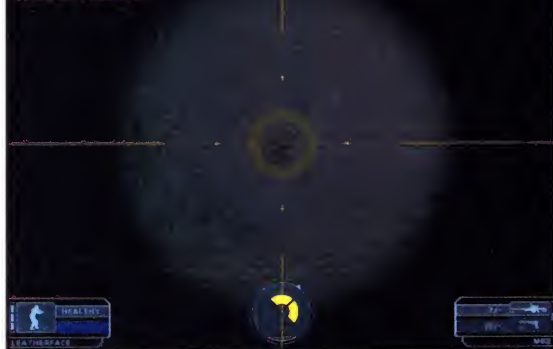
PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Extreme tension • Realistic while still being fun
DOWNERS Heavy lag • Some options not being taken advantage of • Enemies still at a great distance

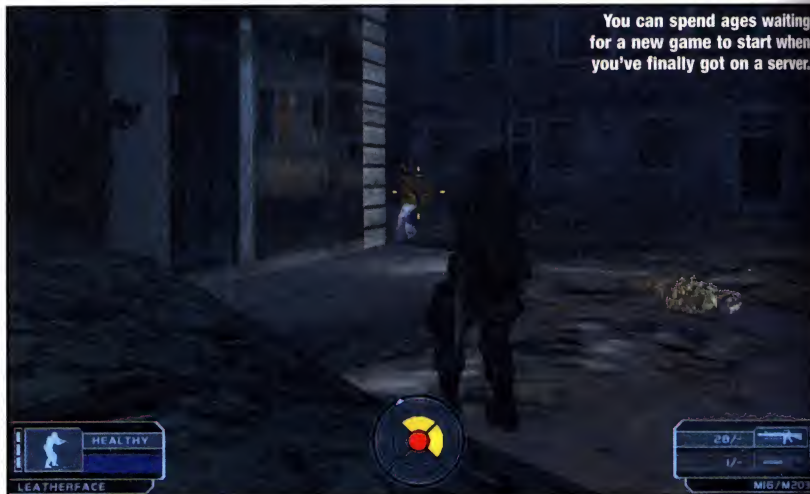


Brilliant and inspired, but not one for the masses

Good snipers can wipe out a whole team in seconds.



Proper teamplay is hard to come by.



You can spend ages waiting for a new game to start when you've finally got on a server.



Most games are based in Korea or Hong Kong, where the real hardcore fans are.



① You can chat in vicinity, but global chat is only available to levels 30 and over.



② It's an orc! Quick, do him. At least he looks different.

LINEAGE: THE BLOOD PLEDGE

★ US\$15 per month (code can be downloaded for free, the game is free for the first month of play) • Ncsoft • Out now • www.lineage-us.com

Lineage finally makes its way from East to West. Here to greet it: Chris Anderson

Lineage may well be the newest addition to the online RPG genre as far as people in the West are concerned, but it's been going strong in Korea for a couple of years now and has amassed a huge following in its native country. The stories behind *Lineage's* fanatical and obsessive players have been well documented. It's not uncommon for grudges held between players in the game to spill over into real-life violence in Korea, and the introduction of many players from the West has not gone down well with some Korean players. If anything, the animosity between eastern and western players prevalent in the game has further harmed

Lineage's already questionable reputation.

To look at the game itself, you can't help but wonder how on earth people became so obsessed with it in the first place. Graphically, it's singularly unimpressive in every department with

“Looks like it was created in someone's bedroom using the most basic of tools”

washed-out colours and a 2D isometric viewpoint giving the impression that the game was created in someone's bedroom with the most basic of tools. Gameplay is nothing particularly special either. There are only four character classes to choose from: prince/princess, knight, elf and

wizard, and while this in itself is not a major bugbear, the fact that you can't customise your character's appearance in any way whatsoever most certainly is. It feels very strange exploring an online environment where a large percentage of the game populace look exactly the same

as you do, and it does nothing to make you identify with your character in the way just about every other online RPG currently available does. Presentation then, is hugely disappointing. However, *Lineage* does have its redeeming qualities if you look hard enough...

There are many organisations in the game called Blood Pledges. These are basically player-created guilds, and if your guild becomes powerful enough you can lay siege to one of the many castles in the game in an attempt to take it over. Of course, you might just as easily lose it again if another player guild decides to challenge your right to your new property, but it's a great way of establishing control of important territory in the game. This is the one true innovation in what is otherwise a very standard online RPG with decidedly shady political overtones. Even compared to *Ultima Online: Third Dawn* it underachieves on a technological level, and if you bring games like

EverQuest or *DAOC* into the equation, well, bye-bye *Lineage*. This, then, is not the game that's going to take the online RPG world by storm, despite its massive popularity in the Far East. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 350 Memory 128Mb RAM
WE SAY That'll work fine

PCZVERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Castle sieges • Low technical requirements
⬇ **DOWNERS** Dated graphics and sound • No 3D • No character customisation

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
EverQuest, your days are numbered. Not!



③ Average graphics, average game, but at least it's playable on a 56k modem.



④ A Blood Pledge goes for an enemy throne. Full on war, basically.

D-DAY NORMANDY BETA 3.2

★ Requires full version of *Quake II* (patched to 3.20) • <http://dynamic.gamespy.com/~dday/site>

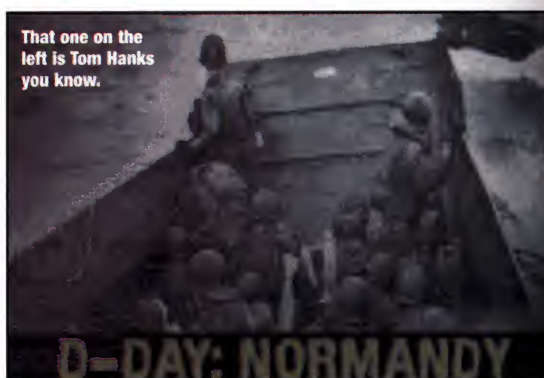
Tony Lamb fights 'em on the beaches...

D-Day Normandy is a member of an ever decreasing club as many *Quake II* mods fall slowly into gaming's historical murk and are forgotten. Luckily for us, not only is it a hugely

enjoyable mod, but the development team are still beaver away to improve it. This version 3.2 update is a bug-fixing and gameplay-tweaking exercise as they

prepare us for Beta 4 – which looks set to propel this already great mod into Classic status.

The game itself is a class-based mod set in a World War II environment, with each



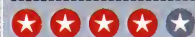
category of soldier having his own weapons, strengths and weaknesses. What sets *D-Day Normandy* apart from other similarly styled mods though is its level of player involvement, with a campaign structure that sees the focus of the game shifting back and forth as either Allied or Axis forces gains the tactical upper hand. This, alongside the already tried-and-trusted format makes for a more intellectual and enjoyable experience than many mods offer, and the well-designed and evocative maps help to

create a convincing period atmosphere. Makes it worth digging out your copy of *Quake II*, and with Beta 4 in the wings, the fun looks set to continue.

PCZVERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** The maps are enjoyable and well designed • Familiar class-based style • Campaign structure

↓ **DOWNERS** Graphics look old now • Limited online support



A brave but futile assault

COMBAT QIII ARENA

★ Needs full version of *Quake III* • <http://combat.telefragged.com/>

Tony Lamb says tanks for the memory...



ⓐ A typical *Combat Arena* maze-style map.

It's retro time again, harking back to the days when 2D was king, 3D was a crap *Jaws* film, and videogaming meant statuesque wooden cabinets, lame music and a pocket full of 10p pieces.

One of the games of the day involved a couple of tanks, viewed from above, sitting on opposite sides of a map (often with an improbably tall mountain or a maze between them). Each would chase the other around, firing shot after shot until one was lucky enough to hit the opposition. It could take ages, but by heck it was fun when you won. This became arcade classic *Combat QIII Arena*, which does the same thing but with the benefit of the *Quake III* engine.

Keeping the style of the original, *Combat QIII Arena* also includes ramps to allow for split-level maps, traps that one player can trigger to destroy another, full bot support, a wide range of player skins (although some are painfully basic tank-shaped blobs), jump pads, lifts, and some cool map designs.

Sadly, we're too spoilt today by all the flashy games around to enjoy this for more than a few minutes, and while it's a blast on a LAN with plenty of players, the single-player versus bots game is disappointing. Don't write it off though – this mod is still a lot of fun. Get some practice in, take it to a LAN party, and slaughter your friends.



ⓐ There's no mistaking what *Combat Arena* is all about.

PCZVERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** Deathmatch, Tournament and CTF options • Great for a LAN party

↓ **DOWNERS** Bots don't miss • View gets annoying • Gun elevation impossible to judge



Flawed retro fun

CHEMICAL EXISTENCE

Needs full version of *Half-Life* • www.redgenesis.com/ce

Tony Lamb gets to grips with a top-class add-on



Prepare yourself for a whole new *Half-Life* experience as you enter the world of *Chemical Existence*. It's a harsh, unforgiving world of drug-crazed gang murder, corporate-sponsored paramilitary goons running around terrorising the population, and unpleasant monsters created in the bowels of chemical company

laboratories. It is not a place you want to hang around in.

What *CE* is however, is a Total Conversion for *Half-Life*, which in this case creates not only a deeply involving single-player episode, but also changes everything else about the game too. Maps, models, items, weapons, sounds and every detail down to the sickening thud as a bullet

ventilates your cranium is new, with a host of fresh combatant and civilian characters to interact with. Or frag... the choice is yours.

This re-writing of the *Half-Life* book gives *CE* a very refreshing feel. It's basically a new game to enjoy and as you take on the role of Reece Max (a slightly geeky Mr Ordinary who winds up in the wrong

place at very much the wrong time) in his battle against both human and test-tube monster enemies, you could be forgiven for forgetting that you're playing a mod at all – it's that good. *CE* isn't easy to complete either; the weapons take some time to master and you'll find that your targets don't stand around waiting to get shot. Screw up and you're dead!



PCZVERDICT

UPPERS A great single-player game • Training level • Hours of fun

DOWNERS Levels often too dark • Outdoor maps can be a bit dull



An excellent addition to the *Half-Life* stable

PAC-UT 1.00

Requires full version of Unreal Tournament • www.planetunreal.com/insomnic

He's fat, he's round, he bounces on the ground – but he's not Tony Lamb

Some of you might be sufficiently crusty enough to remember an early videogame character called Pac-Man. He chomped his way around an increasingly sophisticated set of 2D mazes trying to eat all the pills dotted about while outrunning four angry ghosts. In the pre-PC days of early consoles and home microcomputers, this was the height of gaming chic. What a relief that we've left all that simplistic gameplay behind.

But we haven't, have we? Retro gaming is huge, and up pops *Pac-UT* to remind us that fun doesn't have to mean whopping great downloads, complex plots and a thousand customisable weapons. In *Pac-UT* you run around standard *UT* maps armed only with an

impact hammer and try to collect as many yellow pills as you can. It's up to you whether you want to grab the pills yourself or steal other people's. It's very silly.

In truth, *Pac-UT* is fun. Childish and pointless yes, but fun. It's also a horrific waste of good fragging time and you can mentally play the whole game in 30 seconds flat. But who cares? Ageing *Pac-Man* addicts everywhere will love it.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Fun for a while • The file's tiny

DOWNERS Very little online support • Limited appeal



Short-lived but fun

Use the impact hammer to frag opponents and steal their balls.

Archon wins the match!

Player	Dots	BigDot
Archon	16	
Barak	7	
Jared	6	
Kragoth	4	
GoatMaster	3	
Ichthys	3	
Crysa	0	
		AllDot

Join the dots... can you see what it is yet?



READERS' FREE-FOR-ALL

Martin Korda brings you some very sad news indeed

On Tuesday January 8 2002, we received the sad news that computer games bar and longstanding supporters of our Readers' Free-For-All and Readers' Challenge, The Playing Fields, was forced to close due to a lack of funds. The following statement (which has been slightly shortened here due to space restrictions), was posted on its website www.theplayingfields.co.uk.

The Playing Fields was placed in the hands of liquidators and on 29th January 2002 and will no longer exist. We started out in April 1997 with a vision of helping to push multiplayer computer gaming into the mainstream. After four and a half years of hard graft, we have finally run out of money and so can no longer carry on. History will tell whether we made a difference.

To all our customers, members and friends thank you for all your support over the past few years and thank you for the memories. But most of all thank you to our staff. We have been blessed with some of the best, most loyal, most dedicated staff that you can find. We are only sorry we couldn't find the finance to build on their efforts.

We have always enjoyed making people happy through our own brand of entertainment. It's been a roller coaster ride, but it has always been fun and rewarding.

Thank you for all the messages and condolences that have already arrived. They are much appreciated. Please do not feel offended if we do not manage to reply to all of them :-)

Best wishes
Edward and Charles
The Playing Fields

Over the years, *PC ZONE* and The Playing Fields have enjoyed an excellent relationship, and we were all devastated when we heard the news. We wish all those involved with TPF all the best for the future and send our thanks for all their support.

However, all may not be lost. If you're incredibly rich, and have a few grand kicking about the place, why not bail The Playing Fields out of its current financial predicament by either calling us up or getting in touch directly with The Playing Fields. We'll mention you in the mag and everything, and you'll make hundreds of gamers very happy. Go on, you know you want to.

Due to the timing of the closure announcement (after we went to press with the last issue), we have to apologise to any of you who turned up to our last Free-For-All only to find it didn't exist. We posted a warning on our website www.pczone.co.uk, but there's bound to be many of you who didn't see it.

So onto the final Playing Fields based Readers' Free-For-All on January 7. As usual there were a host of excellent players, including Pyro, RaR and ROR, but a special mention has to go to Swift Silent Deadly. Not because of his playing prowess (he was rubbish), but because he was 12 and had to leave the server at 9.00pm to go to bed. And no, you can't have a job...

We're currently looking for a new location for our Free-For-All. We'll bring you more details soon, until then, you'll have to make do with these pics of memories from The Playing Fields.

Our own Mark Hill Fragging for all he's worth.



The
PlayingFields



HAVE A GO

PC ZONE GAME SERVERS

Provided by www.games-world.net

The *PC ZONE* game servers are now more popular than ever and to ensure only *PC ZONE* readers can play on them, we've decided to password them all. Don't worry though, every month we'll be printing the password you need to get fragging.

Quake III: Arena Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.24:27966
Quake III: Fortress Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.24:27968

Counter-Strike Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.49:27015
Counter-Strike Public Server #2 - 194.93.134.49:27020
Counter-Strike Public Server #3 - 194.93.134.51:27015
Counter-Strike Public Server #4 (*PC ZONE* map pack) - 194.93.134.51:27020

Unreal Tournament Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.52:7787
Unreal Tournament Public Server #2 - 194.93.134.52:7777

Team Fortress Classic Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.50:27015
Team Fortress Classic Public Server #2 - 194.93.134.50:27020

Password: fifty



Microsoft's trackball and mouse range offer the ultimate driving experience on practically any surface and our new Wireless IntelliMouse® Explorer lets you roam free without restrictions. All are equipped with a revolutionary onboard IntelliEye™ optical sensor that scans the terrain up to 6,000* times per second, delivering up to 4 times the performance of other optical mice on the market today. With their unique design enhancements you can steer confidently with even greater accuracy, precision and control. There's no mouse ball to service and all have programmable buttons for storing your favourite routes. Available in a choice of left and right-hand drive models, they're all geared up and ready to go wild.

For more information visit

www.drive-me-wild.co.uk

*Wireless IntelliMouse® Explorer, IntelliMouse® Explorer, IntelliMouse® Optical

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Microsoft®

RAYMAN M

★ £19.99 • Ubi Soft • Out now

Anthony Holden finds out why the wheels fell off

Rayman M is better described by what it's not than what it is. It's not a karting game based on the characters from a cute platform/adventure game, with a standard track-unlocking structure and a selection of throwaway battle modes, hidden characters and assorted bonus games. However, insert running/climbing/swinging/sliding in place of karting and you're pretty much there.

While eschewing the one element that most clearly defines the famously abused karting genre, *Rayman's* first multiplayer outing essentially does all the same things, only on foot. Dash over turbo pads, scale walls, swing across gaps with a grappling device and otherwise slide and clamber your way through 12 obstacle courses of steadily increasing complexity. Along with straightforward racing

there are two collect-'em-up variations, as well as some token battle arena modes that largely fail to amuse.

While the game is not without a degree of charm, there's no escaping the fact that climbing, swinging and sliding around a level (and frequently falling off things in the process) is simply not as much fun as racing around a track firing banana skins or guided missiles at each other. The competition is not as direct nor as cutthroat, and the pleasure of frustrating your mates is almost entirely absent. To top it off, the multiplayer bizarrely manages only up to two-player split-screen.

Hats off to Ubi Soft for doing something other than *Super Rayman Kart*, and making a partial success of it, but this is not a game you're likely to become hooked on.



① Shooting is mostly reserved for hitting switches.



① Rayman has no arms, legs or moustache.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PIII 450
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
16Mb 3D card **WE SAY** A PIII 450 and
128Mb RAM to be safe

PCZVERDICT

① **UPPERS** Lush graphics • Well-designed race levels • Not a karting game
② **DOWNERS** Poor battle modes • No LAN play • Ill-suited to the PC

66 Dial M for Mario



① Switches can be used to alter the track under your opponents' feet.

THE AMAZING VIRTUAL SEA-MONKEYS

★ £24.99 • Just Play • Out now

Rhianna Pratchett is the official instant pet of PC ZONE

Most people have had sea-monkeys. It's all part of growing up that parents buy them for their kids, so they can be hatched out, overfed, knocked over and eventually eaten by the cat. But then that's the miracle of nature at work. You'd think the passing of the decades would produce

something a little more spectacular than *The Amazing Virtual Sea-Monkeys*, maybe a chat show: 'Today on *Briney*, "I'm a crustacean and loving it."'

Unfortunately you'll have to make do with *Virtual Sea-Monkeys*, although the *Amazing* prefix is more than a bit

presumptuous, since this game is anything but. Hatch out your baby sea monkeys in a virtual tank and use them to collect pearls with which you can buy all sorts of oddments to help keep your sea monkeys healthy and entertained, such as automatic feeders or a karaoke machine.

You'd think that coming courtesy of Creature Labs, purveyors of the bestselling

Creatures series you could expect a bit more than that, but unfortunately that's pretty much all you're going to get. Just sit back and watch your monkeys frolic, that is if you are spared the numerous bugs and slowdowns that cropped up throughout the game on no less than four of our machines.

We've been spoiled with AI treats such as *The Sims* and

Black & White, but even for kids this is a poor, not to mention unchallenging and expensive way of cashing in on the virtual life bandwagon. The best thing would be for it to be re-titled 'Sea-Monkeys – as boring as ever but this time we'll make you pay £24.99 to remember that'. That'll teach you to get nostalgic.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233
Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
8Mb graphics card **WE SAY** PII 300 and
64Mb RAM

PCZVERDICT

① **UPPERS** Will keep kids occupied for at least five minutes
② **DOWNERS** Very expensive for what it is • Unchallenging • Cute in a saccharine way • Buggy

28 Buy the real thing



① Even sea-monkeys need to sing a few bars of 'My Way' now and again.



① A sunken galleon, the height of fear for sea-monkeys.

Want WWII in 3D? Get *Medal Of Honor*.

At least he's intelligent enough to fall over when shot.

WWII: IWO JIMA

★ £19.99 • ValuSoft • Out now

**PCZONE
PANTS**

A contender for *Medal Of Honor's* crown? Don't make me laugh sneers **Martin Korda**

Follow me, if you will, around the back of *Iwo Jima's* box, while I take you on a joyride of outrageous claims and false promises that miserably attempt to deceive you into thinking this is some kind of ground breaking WWII FPS, set during America's 1945 assault on the Pacific Theatre. Cobbled together by the same bunch responsible for the risible *WWII: Normandy* (reviewed PCZ #105, 14%), the bold but hideously misleading accolades plastered all over its packaging make it hard not to think someone was seriously taking the piss.

Right, where to start? OK, how about this one? "Battle it out in adrenaline-pumping first-person action." The only true statement here is the "first-person" bit, as neither is the action "adrenaline-pumping" nor is it particularly "a battle". All that's required of you and the vaguely intelligent sidekicks who you command, is to run as fast as possible from

one end of the level to the other, while picking off a moronic bunch of AI controlled enemies. The sum of the enemy's intelligence involves either charging at you head on, firing randomly in your general direction, or just standing completely still looking at you while you line them up and pop out their brains.

How about "Incredible 3D technology." Yeah, riiiiiiight. Poor clipping, featureless models and pathetic explosion effects, which would make a Christmas cracker feel inadequate. I don't know about you, but I'm unimpressed. Then there's: "Use cunning assault tactics." A brief glance at a dictionary would have shown, that the act of running round a corner and shooting static enemies does not, in fact, require anything even approaching cunning.

I'll stop there. If nothing else, at least it's an improvement on the last game, and the inclusion

of sidekicks does add some extra interest. However, they should have just stuck, "This is one of the worst FPSs you're ever likely to play" on the box instead. At least I would have respected them for it.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P266
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
DirectX 8 compatible 3D card **WE SAY**
Some explosives for the box and a PII
300 for the game

PCZVERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Vaguely intelligent side-kicks
back you up • Fairly challenging on
harder levels
⬇ **DOWNERS** Piss poor AI • Crap
graphics • About 19 pounds
too expensive

19 Medal of Dishonor

RALLY TROPHY

★ £19.99 • ValuSoft • Out now

Steve Hill is driven round the bend by yet another rally game

**PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE**

If I have to drive one more Toyota Corolla around Corsica there will be trouble. Rally games seem to arrive on a daily basis, with the majority of them finding their way to my doormat. In fact, I thought we'd already reviewed this one,

but after playing it for a couple of hours, I soon realised I hadn't. This one is actually quite good. Which makes a refreshing change.

On closer inspection, *Rally Trophy* is an excellent rally driving game, developed by Finnish outfit Bugbear. If there's one



thing Finns are good at, it's rally driving (they're not bad at darts either). However, rather than the usual predictable approach of most other rally games, *Rally Trophy* is a retro affair featuring authentic vehicles of the '60s and '70s. So if you've ever wanted to drive a Ford Cortina round Russia, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland and Kenya, here's your chance.



Bear in mind that these cars are the real deal though, right down to sound recordings of the actual models. There's no power steering here, and simply keeping them on the road can be a wrestle. Of course, once you do get the hang of it, the whole experience becomes addictive and rewarding. The game can be best compared to the similarly old-skool *Grand Prix Legends*, and while it's not quite as difficult, it certainly isn't for amateurs. It's worth putting the hours in though, because while it's by no means perfect, it provides a satisfying drive. JoWood has a real winner on its hands with this one.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P300
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
8Mb 3D card **WE SAY** Horse shit. Try a
P650, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

PCZVERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Authentic vehicles •
Challenging • Random appearance of
indigenous wildlife
⬇ **DOWNERS** A bit niche • 2D trees •
Another rally game

80 Reassuringly difficult



Let it
snow,
let it
snow,
let it
snow...

PC CD-ROM

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DIGGLES

£29.99 • Infogrames • Out now

"A Norse, a Norse, my kingdom for a Norse!" cries Rhianna Pratchett

Sorcerer's Cave is a board game I remember fondly from my childhood. In true Dungeons & Dragons style, you progressed through the game by turning over a series of cards depicting either a tunnel or a cave, the latter containing extra cards revealing monsters and treasures. Cue girlish giggling and a floor filled with a sprawling mass of passageways and caves. Simple but fun, and it beat dressing up the cat.

Diggles reminds me of those innocent times. It's equally random and sprawling, and to an outside observer a rather disturbing peek into the mentality of those involved. Revolving loosely around Norse mythology the game centres on the Diggles dwarfs, who are enlisted by the god Odin to go and retrieve the six rings of power that are

needed to recapture his escaped pooch, Fenris.

The idea (similar to *Creatures*) is to raise your little army of Diggles, and divide their time between sleeping, eating, making more Diggles and digging through four different worlds and 100 quests. In fact, there's so much to do, at times the whole experience becomes hugely bewildering.

The graphics are somewhat chunky in places, but the combat is primitive, but the basic AI is pretty good, especially the blink-and-you'll-miss-'em gnomish actions such as knitting and doing handstands. Unfortunately there's no real sense of direction or coherence, leaving you confused and vaguely weirded out. After a few hours you'll feel a pressing need to be back in the daylight among non-hamster-eating people of a normal height.



Just when you wonder what's going on, you find a village of stoned, drunk Rasta dwarfs and all becomes clear.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PIII 350
Memory 128Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
8 x CD-ROM **WE SAY** A PIII 500 would
definitely be better

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Amusing AI • Challenging
DOWNERS Chunky graphics • Poor
combat • Hard to follow

68 Can you dig it?



A baby is born in camp Diggles.

UPLINK

£14.99 (www.introversion.co.uk) • Introversion Software • Out now

Martin Korda gets hacked off

We've all dreamt of being hackers at some point in our lives. Be it breaking into the school system to change grades or uncovering government secrets, we've all hankered after the ability to hack into somewhere we're not meant to go. However, the fear of being dragged out of bed at 3am by six heavily built, balaclava-clad men, bundled into an unregistered

white van and dangled naked from a suspension bridge was always a pretty good deterrent (and that's just for hacking into the school computer). Thankfully, *Uplink* gives you the opportunity to live out this dream, without the danger.

Originally designed as part of a degree project by a handful (about the size of a small child's

actually) of programmers, *Uplink* turned out to be such a success that they thought they'd see if they could make a name for themselves with it, as well as making a quid or two along the way. And for the most part, they've succeeded.

You play an Uplink agent, who sells his hacking services to a number of major corporations. Before long, you find yourself embroiled in a world of sabotage and money laundering, as you use an ever more impressive array of computer hardware to set up gateways into foreign systems, grabbing the required information and getting out before you're tracked down and taken out of action by the authorities.

A particularly interesting touch is the ability to invest your earnings in a dynamic stock market which you can influence through your hacks. As your skill level progresses and hardware improves, hacks become increasingly difficult.



Not the brightest spark in the tinderbox.

Unfortunately, there's not enough variety on offer to keep you gripped for as long as the game initially promises, as the majority of excitement comes from breaking and entering, then getting out before you're caught – which inevitably wanes after a couple of days.

Saying that, *Uplink* is thoroughly enjoyable and addictive, a rare modern example of gameplay triumphing over graphics. Considering the size of the team, it's an impressive piece of programming, and if developer Introversion Software builds on its promise, then it has a very bright future ahead of it.

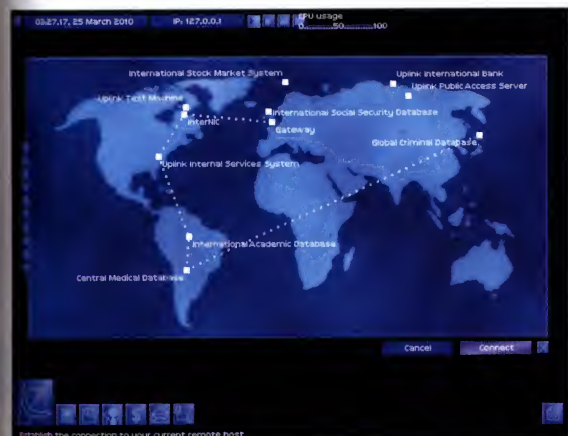
TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor Pentium with Windows 95 or Linux **Memory** 32Mb
ALSO REQUIRES OpenGL and 20Mb HD
space **WE SAY** That's fine

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Extremely addictive •
Entertaining • Tense • Original
DOWNERS Poor graphics • Wanes
within a week • Slightly repetitive

70 Hacking good fun



Hack systems from all over the world.

BUDGET ZONE

Because you don't need to whack it on your credit card

★ CHEAPSKATE Richie Shoemaker

ULTIMATE QUAKE PACK

**BEST
BUY**

★ £24.99 • Activision • Out now

**PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE**

Not bad value, considering you can buy *Quake III Arena* for about £20. It helps of course that despite their age there are still many people playing both the original *Quake* and *Quake II* online. Right now in fact, *Quake II* is more popular than *Tribes 2* and there are more people playing the original *Quake* online than *Serious Sam*, *Quake III Team Arena* and *Kingpin* combined. Impressive for a couple of old codgers, don't cha think?

In terms of offline play there is rather less mileage. The original *Quake* lost its shine after the first episode and though infinitely better, *Quake II* has dated gameplay-wise. Need we mention the failings of *Quake III's* single-player game?

However as a trilogy not only does the *Quake* series offer incredible value for the online gamer, it chronicles the pinnacle of first-person gaming over the last six years and deserves to be bought for that reason alone. Despite a lack of any of the various mission packs, this is a compilation of milestone games, each of which is still incredibly popular, both in terms of people still playing them and those that still create mods, maps and player models for them. If you missed *Quake III* first time round, it would make sense to get them all in one handy box.

PCZVERDICT

81%



PROJECT IGI

★ £12.99 • Eidos • Out now

**PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE**

With a sequel due soon, what better time to track down the original stealth action shooter, with you as lone ex-SAS hero sneaking your way across Eastern Europe. The fact the game remains in our Top 10 shooters after a busy year in the genre shows it still has something going for it, especially at half its original price.

Wide-open levels, a seamless mix of action and sabotage, plus excellent level design make this an essential purchase

for action fans. The AI isn't too realistic, but if you like your games hard this'll provide more than a challenge. That's not to say the game is without its frustrations and the indoor fighting is fairly dull in places, but unlike most games it's well-paced and varied enough throughout to keep you going right through to the end.

PCZVERDICT

82%



DOOM: COLLECTOR'S EDITION

★ £9.99 • Activision • Out now

If you're just about to pop out and buy the *Ultimate Quake Pack* for sentimental reasons, you might as well add this to your shopping list; *Ultimate Doom*, *Doom II* and its add-on *Final Doom*. Whether you'll actually play any of them to their conclusion is another matter. Just as it would be difficult to see anyone playing the original *Civilization*, *Dune 2* or *Championship Manager* beyond a brief sojourn down memory lane, so too it's hard to envisage anyone spending time dispatching pixelated pink demons when there are a number of far more

interesting, not to mention realistic, games around these days.

But there's still a spark of magic in there. Maybe it's the sound effects or those shareware levels we all remember so fondly. You'd be hard pressed to find a decent multiplayer game, but at least there are plenty of add-ons to try out, not least of which are a couple of amazing graphical remixes. Check out www.doomcenter.com for more info.

PCZVERDICT

68%

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER SEASON 2000/01

★ £12.99 • Eidos • Out now

You could be forgiven for being utterly confused by the number of versions of *Championship Manager* filling the bargain shelves, as we seem to be reviewing one or other of them every month. This however is the most up-to-date edition available for a budget price, and can easily be updated to accommodate this season's stats thanks to a wealth of third-party stat packs on the Net. Best of all is that the updated CM3 engine is much improved on the flaky original, currently

going for a fiver. If you're a Coventry fan or one of those who last year found their team relegated, you'd probably prefer this to the current chart-topper. As we always like to point out, it comes down to how up to date you like your stats, but if you've been waiting to dip your toe into the deep waters of football management there is now no better or cheaper place to begin.

PCZVERDICT

87%



⚡ As we all know, the Nationwide league is where the real action is.



XPLOSIVE TOP 10

★ £24.99 • Xplosive • Out now

You've a right to be a little suspicious when all someone is asking for ten games is £24.99. A look down the menu of what's on offer and you won't find much gaming nourishment, especially since most of the games are conversions of old Sega Saturn games, none of which – save *Sega Worldwide Soccer* – are particularly awful, but equally, few you'll play for any longer than five minutes. *Virtua Fighter* and *Virtua Cop* are probably the best of the Sega offerings, otherwise there's the passable and comparatively modern *Cricket Captain 2000* and the always entertaining *Pro Pinball: Timeshock*.

As a compilation it's a disparate and desperate collection of games, just about worth the asking price, but unlikely to do much for your collection other than fill a rather small gap in your gaming back catalogue.

PCZVERDICT

56%



⚡ *Virtua Fighter*: old but still OK.



⚡ Not the best time to lose your head.



⚡ Loads of new multiplayer levels.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE: PLATINUM EDITION

★ £9.99 • Activision • Out now

Soldier Of Fortune turned out to be a damned good-looking game at the time, offering enough meaty weapons and corpse mutilation to satiate any xenophobic psychopath with a fetish for guns. Gameplay-wise there was more than enough in the way of varied levels and button-pushing, even if the whole thing followed the standard run-kill formula that only now we've managed to get away from.

Playing the game as real-life mercenary John Mullins and

slaughtering the entire population of the Middle East, the game was one that some felt uncomfortable with, and rightly so. On the other hand, it's easy enough to just enjoy the game for what it is; a blood-soaked and brainless action game. This edition also includes the Gold Patch, with two deathmatch modes, bot support and 18 new maps, as well as the Platinum Map Pack.

PCZVERDICT

75%



⚡ Do I amuse you?

GANGSTERS 2

★ £12.99 • Eidos • Out now

Despite overhauling the interface from the first game and offering a much simpler control method with all the usual RTS trappings, *Gangsters 2* still managed to disappoint us. There's plenty to do of course: set up illegal casinos, bootlegging, prostitution and bribing, but it just isn't very interesting or involving. You glide from mission to mission without any real feeling for the game or its characters. Part of it has to do with the dull graphics, but some blame must be laid on the designers for concentrating so much on the crime aspect of the game that it appears one-dimensional and you quickly lose interest. It's a shame because there really isn't that much wrong with the game apart from the fact it's so infuriatingly average – the concept has always been a winner. Maybe next time they'll get it right. Let's hope so.

PCZVERDICT

55%

HITMAN: CODENAME 47

★ £12.99 • Eidos • Out now



Hitman was one of those games you either loved or loathed. Playing a silent assassin isn't something we get to do very often and despite some control niggles/major annoyances, once you get used to things it becomes an intense and incredibly atmospheric experience. Sneaking up behind guards and strangling them, dragging the twitching bodies behind crates and dumping them in the sewer – there's much here that *Thief* fans will enjoy, as well as those action fans looking for a more cerebral challenge than *Max Payne* allowed.

Graphically it still looks good, especially the animations, and although there are a couple of dodgy missions halfway through the game, once you stick it out you'll really begin getting real value for money.

PCZVERDICT

85%



⚡ The hit factory.

FEEDBACK

You give your opinions on two of the biggest shooters of last year.
Martin Korda attempts to keep some semblance of order...

WE WANT YOUR REVIEWS

We want your reviews of the games that you've loved and hated the most from the past three months. Each review should be between 50 and 150 words in length, and come with a score out of 100. Any review over 150 words will not be printed. You also need to send your name and address as we'll be giving out a prize for the best review of the issue.

WRITE TO Feedback, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD

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RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

REVIEWED PCZ #112, Feb 2002
SCORE 88%

What we said

As a sequel, it surpasses its originator, retains much of its humour (though an appearance of Hitler himself would have been appreciated), and much of the humour is damn good fun. But it certainly ain't no classic, despite the quality multiplayer game.

What you thought

★ Eight hours and one minute. That is the time it has taken me to complete *Wolfenstein*. I estimate 15 hours of play in total, eight in-game. *Max Payne* took me longer than this. Much longer.

FPSs are my favourite genre, and this is a stunning example of that genre. The weapons, sounds, textures, AI – everything is honed to perfection. Everything except the game length.

Well, time to hope the Internet connection is in a good mood – there is no single-player left, so unhappily I go online...

Niall Taylor

★ I've just completed *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*, after a three-day gripping and totally immersive shooting frenzy. I haven't played *AvP2* yet, but *Wolf's* AI takes some beating, and is the reason I enjoyed it more than any other FPS. *Wolf's* enemies aren't idiots like those in other games, who stand around waiting to be blown away when a grenade lands at their feet. No, they actually run! And the babes in leather are actually clever enough to flank you when pushed back. And at last, enemies who reload. It's taken games a long time to address these points, so instead of them blasting at you constantly, it's actually a fairer match. They go behind pillars and try different tactics if you reload a saved game. Although this makes

“The weapons, sounds, textures, AI – everything is honed to perfection. Everything except the game length”

NIALL TAYLOR RECKONS *WOLFENSTEIN'S* TOO SHORT

it a lot harder, especially further on in the game, it makes it far more impressive. The cut-scenes

were at times amusing, but why are English people always portrayed as cockneys or tea-drinking aristocrats? However, the dialogue was on a par with *Thief* and had the humour of *Max*

Payne. With great tension throughout, I just can't leave this game alone.

Craig Bilner

★ Being a dedicated *Half-Life* fan like many, I've felt rather starved in the FPS department over the last couple of years or so. Playing *Half-Life* for three years and finding myself wasting money on inferior FPSs has left me rather annoyed. Then *AvP2* was released and I was able to take some of this frustration out on possibly the coolest array of characters to grace the PC FPS scene. But what happened next totally surprised me. I'm no longer playing *AvP2*, as I've recently purchased a funky number called *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*.

Some might moan that it's merely a *Quake III* mod. Well didn't *Half-Life* use the *Quake II* engine? This is not just a *Quake III* mod. This is so much more.

There is just something about this game that makes me want to play it more than the other two (*Half-Life* and *AvP2*). Imagine the beauty of the *Quake III* engine but with the gameplay of *Half-Life*.

Is *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* really as good as it could have been?



When *RTCW* was made it seems as though the developers wanted to take the best parts from all the other FPSs, without including any of the rubbish parts which let the others down.

This game for me, and I'm sure for others, is what FPS fans have been waiting for. It rocks. Its visuals are stunning. The enemies run back to a more defensive position once they spot you; they seem to work together giving covering fire to those up front attacking. Being able to boot doors open rather than opening them with keys is a nice touch, although you can do both.

Stamina to sprint adds another perk to the game and the guns are cool unlike the rubbish that's in *Quake III* and *Elite Force*. This is what I would have expected if *Quake III* hadn't been an arena- or tournament-based shooter.

It's fantastic! In addition it already has some good servers online and the multiplayer side of the game is even better than the single-player. *AvP2* on the other hand has some nice features, but I would go as far as to say that *RTCW* is better than both *AvP2* and *Half-Life*. Why? Well, based on the fact it looks better than *Half-Life* and plays just as well. The multiplayer side of it is also much better than *AvP2* because it has better servers. Overall, *RTCW* just about steals it over *AvP2*, but only just.

SMOKE

★ 88 per cent? How can you give *RTCW* 88 per cent? It's just as good as *AvP2* (apart from the

Spread 'em.



Comment

Although we loved *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*, we couldn't help but feel a little let down by it. Perhaps it was because we got hold of the code round about the same time *Medal Of Honor* landed on our desks, a game which has swept all competition away almost without a trace. Or perhaps it's because it simply wasn't as good as we'd been led to believe. Strangely though, much of the response we've received from you has been overwhelmingly positive. Perhaps that's because *Medal Of Honor* hasn't found its way onto your hard disks yet. Or perhaps it's because it turned out to be all you hoped it would be and more. Whatever the reason though, it's hard not to agree that it's still one of the finest shooters around, and the graphics, AI and atmosphere are for the most part excellent. However, we feel that after the utterly immersive experiences of *AvP2* and *MoH*, *Wolfenstein's* single-player game proved to be too erratic to warrant a Classic award.

GHOST RECON

REVIEWED PCZ #110, Christmas 2001

SCORE 86%

What we said

Ghost Recon is good enough for you to push any moral dilemmas aside and concentrate on team-based tactics and good old shooting reflexes. And it possesses the main ingredient so essential to these types of games: no matter how many times you die, you keep coming back for more until you've cracked it.

What you thought

★ I generally agreed with your rating of *Ghost Recon*. Personally I think it is more of a pleasure to play than *Operation Flashpoint*. *OF* has a major advantage over *GR* in that it allows you to play for either side (thanks to an add-on pack). In actual fact, in *GR1* found my sympathies lay with the rebels, defending themselves against those Yankee invaders. It's imperative if these combat games are to reflect reality that we are allowed to play both sets of combatants. This is often a problem with US military games... the idea that anyone would want to identify with anybody but "our boys" doesn't occur to them. Apart from all this though, *Ghost Recon* is a great game. It has a very well-

developed interface, and great effects. And thanks – for the best gaming magazine.

Phillip Bird

★ I've just finished playing one of the greatest and most tense games of all time. I am talking about Tom Clancy's latest masterpiece, *Ghost Recon*. It is an example of a game which wasn't at all hyped by the press like other FPSs I could mention, and yet turned out to be one of the games of the year. The way that you work in a team and can order your men so easily with the intuitive interface is nothing short of brilliant, while the atmosphere as you creep up on a group of enemies unseen before taking

them silently out of action sent shivers down my spine.

The AI is also worth talking about, showing true intelligence and often acting like a real-life opponent would. The graphics are first class and without doubt some of the best I've ever seen in an FPS. Even the trees look real.

If there is one thing I would have changed in your review it would have been the overall score, as I think 86 per cent was a bit on the low side. All in all, I think every part of the game is so superbly playable that the game deserves a Classic award. Ninety per cent would have been nearer the mark.

Steve Field

Comment

We were never in any doubt that *Ghost Recon* was going to be a cracker of a game, having followed its progress for several months before its release. However, we weren't quite prepared for the size of the response that the game would generate, with countless numbers of you writing in to proclaim *Ghost Recon* as one of your favourite games of 2001. It's tense, the playing areas are huge and the AI and visuals are excellent, and while it doesn't quite offer as much diversity and authenticity as *Operation Flashpoint*, you'd be foolish to pass this one over. **PCZ**

graphics that is). How could you not even begin to discuss how amazing the AI is? Having waited for a review in issue #111, I gave up waiting and decided to purchase the game. While playing the first level and seeing a guard, I tried to shoot him. The little bugger moved out of the way, and hid behind a post. So I decided to sneak up behind him, thinking the AI wouldn't be smart enough to react, only to find he had flanked me. Another good thing is the way that the guards and monsters in the catacombs crouch to avoid fire. If you'd talked about the AI more, I'm sure your final score would have been between 90-94 per cent.

Kevin Broomhall
(aka Kevkarnage)

★ Is it just me, or was I playing this game about four years ago? I absolutely love FPSs and own most of those in your Top 100, but when I loaded *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* I couldn't help but feel disappointed. The graphics are very well done indeed, but the game really did feel like an old game. In your review you said the game gets better towards the end. £34.99 for a game that's only good at the end? Any takers? Thank God I waited for your review first (I always do).

I am not saying that the game is rubbish – far from it. I just think that after all this time we should be expecting something a little different. I wanted this game to be good, but I ended up feeling really let down.

Style 69





REALITY CHECK: WINTER SPORTS

Steve Hill brings a whole new meaning to chilling out

If it's so cold that the rain has frozen, the sensible thing might be to stay indoors. But for many, the first hint of snow is a cue to don garish outfits and perform potentially life-threatening activities. Sliding down a mountain on a plank of wood, for instance. Once a minority pursuit, snowboarding has now increased in popularity to such an extent that it has been accepted as an Olympic sport. It has also spawned a host of videogames, all of which present it as a ludicrously enjoyable pastime. It can't be that much fun can it? Let's have a look.

Whistler, Canada: one of North America's finest resorts, and a fitting location for my first snowboarding lesson. Charged with the task of teaching me to board is resident guide, Craig, a

man who if he were any more laid back would need resuscitation. It could be the mountain air, or it could be down to his alternate interpretation of the initials of British Columbia: "BC, man, Better Cannabis." I couldn't possibly comment. An hour later, I was still struggling to speak.

Craig appears to have been snowboarding since birth, and makes it look as natural as walking. He's only got two days to impart this knowledge, so we begin with the basics. It's all about shifting body weight from one side to the other, and angling the board for braking. I am soon able to negotiate a nursery slope, but I haven't come here to piss about and declare myself ready to tackle something more challenging. A medium-sized incline takes my fancy, and I put

my best foot forward and make like a snowboarder. It's too good to last, and my wrists and coccyx take a regular battering as I go arse over tit time and time again. This is frustrating enough in a game, but hauling your fat arse off the snow every 30 seconds is a major physical effort, and a long way removed from fun. Worse still, the constant jarring

least have the decency to haul myself into some bushes before retching up the remnants of the previous evening's tequila frenzy. Enough already.

TREE BOY

Refreshed and recuperated, the following day sees an early start, and we are atop the mountain by 8am. It's a glorious sight, and the

snow is so soft that it's like falling into cotton wool. Craig is impressed and beckons me to follow him. I manage to keep pace until he suddenly veers off the course into some forestry. Buoyed by my previous success I elect to follow him, a decision that involves equal amounts of bravery and stupidity. Not since *Death Chase 2000* on the Spectrum has the propensity of so many trees been so frightening, but through a combination of luck and skill I manage not to wrap myself around one.

Emerging from gorse, I even manage a tiny amount of air. This small victory is soon put into perspective when a fourball of be-goateed dudes virtually fly over my head and rapidly disappear out of view, earning disapproving looks from the monophobic skiing fraternity.

"As I gracelessly slump to the bottom of the slope, I reach the point of no return, spewing hot sick into the snow"

unsettles my stomach, and as I gracelessly slump to the bottom of the slope, I reach the point of no return, spewing hot red sick into the snow. Not the most auspicious of starts, and a second attempt follows a similar pattern, although this time I at

virgin powder is there for the taking. A world away from the previous day's floundering, I am soon tearing up the slopes like a natural. It's nothing less than sensational, and I can't help but whoop like a child. Obviously there are still a few spillages, but



VS



They look like they've fallen out of a videogame, and make my amateurish efforts look all the more pitiful. Sod 'em. I may not be ready for the Olympics yet, but I consider myself a snowboarder, and I've got the trousers to prove it.

SNOW FUN

Going down a mountain is a lot of fun, but what about up? Clearly, we're going to need more than a plank of wood, and so commandeer a convoy of snowmobiles. They're a doddle to drive and dangerously powerful, able to surmount all but the steepest of slopes. Our instructors lead us down some narrow tracks

before unleashing us on a huge natural bowl. Able to let rip, I manage a decent pace, with the slightest bump enough to buck me out of my seat, forcing me to ride it like a horse. Growing in confidence, I attempt to negotiate the outer rim of the bowl. It seems I have grossly misjudged the nature of snow though, as I am immediately sunk up to the nuts in a drift, and have to be dug out, much to my humiliation. Tit.

So how do games compare with messing about in the snow then? Frankly, they don't. You may be safer and warmer in front of your PC, but this is the most fun you can legally have with white powder. [C]



Hill prepares to excavate his nasal cavity.

HOW REAL IS...

SUPREME SNOWBOARDING

In the sense that a rank amateur can tear down extremely dangerous ravines and perform elaborate tricks at the first time of asking, it's not very real at all. However, as far as recreating the sense of euphoria, it does a fair old job, and certainly looks the part.

★★★★☆



SALT LAKE 2002

Fettered by their insistence on taking a documentary approach to the Olympic event, this is realistic in that it exactly recreates the look of the competition. It's a no-frills affair though, simply involving weaving down a slalom, which is admittedly about all a beginner could muster.

★★★★☆



SKI-DOO: X-TEAM RACING

It looks the part, and the fact that you have to lean your body to negotiate turns borders on realistic. However, this is an idealised version of the sport featuring outrageous stunts that if attempted for real would see you snapped like a bit of old twig.

★★★★☆



SNOW CROSS

The handling isn't really up to scratch and can see you tossed from your steed, which in my case is fairly realistic. Again, this is an exaggerated attempt at recreating the thrills of snowboarding, with the key difference being that this one is crap.

★★★☆☆



He's around here somewhere. Probably semi-conscious with a face full of snow. Nothing changes.



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PC Pro | Recommended
VM Pro 413 | October 2001

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High Brightness technology from iiyama. The Vision Master Pro 413 is the first CRT to offer unrivalled image quality for business use and a High Brightness mode to add definition and a natural brilliance to moving image applications such as gaming, DVD and video editing.

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TERRATEC DMX 6FIRE 24/96

★ Terratec • £160 • 0870 458 0011 (Euro-Tech Marketing) • www.terratec.net

Audigy Platinum has a new competitor from Terratec – with a few bells and whistles of its own. Tim Ponting plugs in

Terratec's latest mainstream soundcard is, on the face of it, very similar to Creative Labs' Audigy Platinum. Both claim 24-bit/96kHz operation, have breakout boxes that sit in a spare 5.25-inch drive bay with a wealth of additional analogue and digital connections, and offer full 5.1 (front, surround, centre and subwoofer) outputs.

However, in many ways, the 6fire trumps its competitor. The chipset utilised is the somewhat aged but highly respected Envy24, used in semi-professional audio I/O cards from respected manufacturers such as Midiman, Sonorus, Seasound and Terratec itself. This is remarkable in that it can record and mix audio streams in full 24-bit, unlike Audigy, which mixes internally at 16-bit/48kHz. This is extremely useful for project studio musicians, though the benefits for gamers are less noticeable. The external box also carries a full phono pre-amp, so you can record your vinyl direct from turntable into your PC.

However, from a strictly gaming perspective, the 6fire lacks certain features of its competitor. It has no FireWire ports – fast data connectors that allow the connection of a variety of suitable peripherals – and also super-fast peer-to-peer networking. Creative also supports a number of more 'gimmicky' features such as hardware audio timestretching and 'DREAM' surround up-mixing – see the Audigy review (issue 110) for more information. Audigy also sees the introduction of 'EAX Advanced HD', Creative Labs' latest and greatest programming interface for developers wishing to add ever more realistic real-time audio effects into their games. Audigy is presently the only card that supports these features.

However, thanks to the inclusion of Sensaura's full range of 3D audio features and support

for EAX 1 and 2, the 6fire is no gaming slouch in current-generation games. We tested with a variety of titles and ran the card through our usual *Unreal Tournament* audio benchmark suite – and on a purely subjective level things sounded excellent. The mixer application allows you to tweak a wide variety of settings, including a selection of 2.0, 4.0 and 5.1 operations (see the speaker round-up in issue 111 for an explanation of speaker

is excellent, though unlike Audigy there is no facility to re-route low frequency information from the main channels to the subwoofer; this is a useful feature when you have only small satellite speakers.

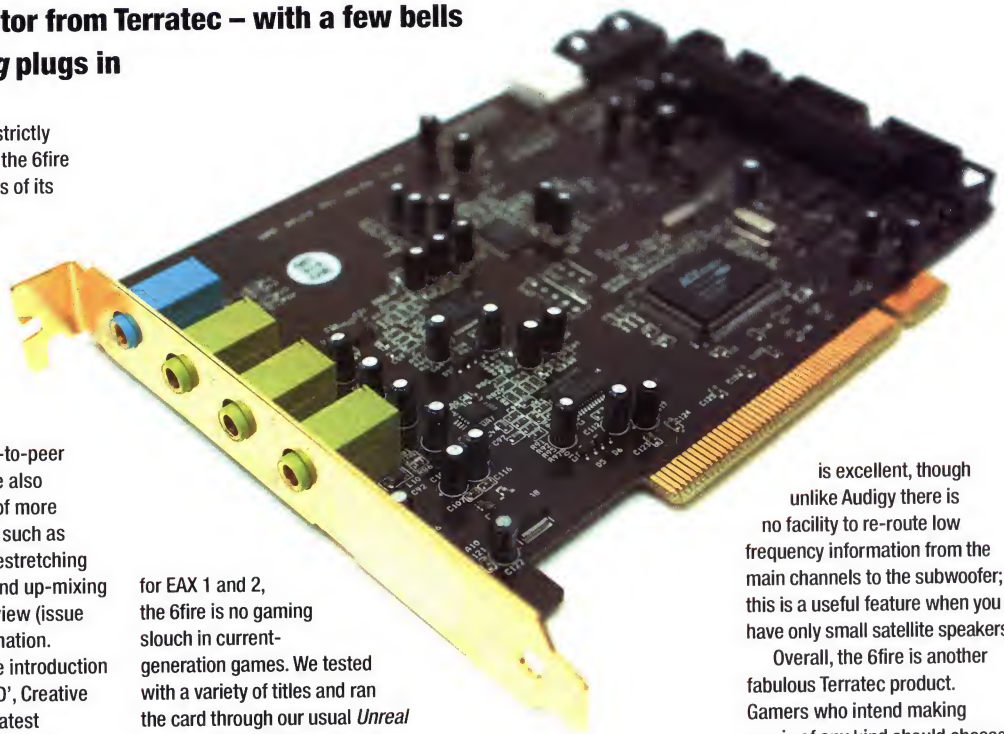
Overall, the 6fire is another fabulous Terratec product. Gamers who intend making music of any kind should choose this over Audigy Platinum; those who are only interested in gaming would be better off with the basic Audigy card. Your choice, people.

configurations). In addition, Sensaura 3D optimisation for 2-speaker/headphone usage is also switchable.

Where 5.1 movie playback is concerned, performance using the supplied PowerDVD software

PCZVERDICT

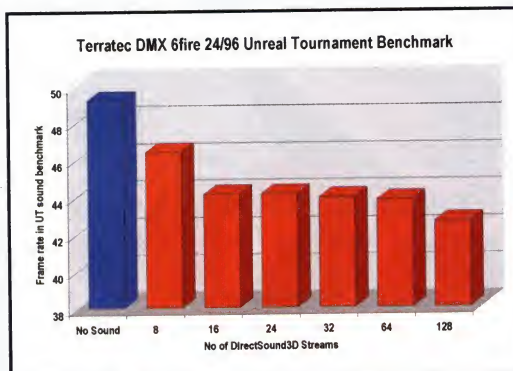
84%



➤ The external box lets you record straight onto your PC.

BENCHMARKS

Here are the *Unreal Tournament* performance graphs. These aren't comparable to others previously printed – what's significant is how many frames per second the audio streams rob. This is a fine result, comparable to most modern cards, though not as good as SoundBlaster Live! or Audigy, which accelerate 3D audio exceptionally well.



CONNECTIONS AND BUNDLE

So what do you get in the box?

Internal: CD1, CD2, Aux In; CD digital in, connector for older Terratec add-on units, such as the MicrowavePC; connector for supplied breakout box.

External: On spine – stereo Line in, Front, Surround, Centre/Sub (all mini-jacks). On breakout box – Line In (phonos), Turntable in (phonos), Line out (phonos), Mic in (jack), Headphones out (jack), S/P-DIF digital i/o (both coaxial and optical), MIDI in/out.

Software Included: Cyberlink PowerDVD 3.0 (six-channel version), Emagic MicroLogic Fun (audio/sequencer), Steinberg WaveLab Lite 2.0, WaveLab RIAA plug-in (vinyl filter), Terratec SoundLaundry, Feurio Audio CD Burning, Musicmatch Jukebox and a huge selection of well-chosen shareware. You can tell we like this, can't you?

AND THEN IT WORKED...

When we first installed the 6fire, it performed erratically and bluescreened regularly. The reason? It didn't like sharing IRQ 12. Simply moving it into another PCI slot, resulting in it being allocated a different IRQ line, solved the problem. The moral: whenever you have problems with audio cards, try a different slot. It nearly always works.

GADGETS

More bright and shiny things to make you happy

NOKIA 5510

★ £99.99 with contract • Carphone Warehouse • 0808 100 9250 • www.carphonewarehouse.com

Britain has gone SMS mad. We're now sending a whopping 40 million messages a day, and the numbers just keep rising. But in case you haven't yet discovered the joys of text, the 5510 is the perfect tool to get you going.

With its full Qwerty keyboard split around its screen, texting is as fast as your thumbs allow. And because you can enter any word in full you don't have to deal with irritating predictive text trying to get you to say dial, when you really want to tell your mate he's a dick.

OK, so it may not be the most stylish phone on the block, but it's definitely the one with most tricks. Because in addition to its SMS allure, it packs in an

MP3 player, impressive-sounding FM radio, Wap email, and games facilities. With 64Mb of internal memory you can just about squeeze on two hours of music, and can even record straight from the radio. Who said piracy was dead? And if someone calls you while you're deep in the groove, the music will stop, allowing you to take the call without removing the headphones.

The only downside of the 5510 is its size. But with this many features, what do you expect? But you can't help feeling a bit of a dial with it stuck to your ear. ★★★★★



LOMO SUPERSAMPLER

★ £39.95 • www.firebox.com

If you fancy treating yourself to a snazzy new camera this year, but can't afford to fork out for a digital model due to post-Christmas poverty, then this yellow box may be for you. And while it may not look quite as sleek as the Canon Ixus, we can assure you it's a lot more fun.

Because beneath the cheesy, plasticky veneer of the Supersampler lurks an ingenious mechanism, capable of giving you not one, but four images per shot. But how, we hear you cry? Quite simply it has four lenses that are exposed over either two or 0.2 seconds, giving you a series of motion-like images, placed one above the other, on a single photograph. Clever eh? Just think of it as a flick-book for the millennium and you'll get the idea.

Its ripcord film-winder is a nice addition, putting the finishing touches to this quirky package. In fact the only normal thing about the Supersampler is that it takes good old-fashioned 35mm film, which you can get developed at your local chemist. But they don't want you to do it like that... Send them to the Lomolab and you'll get a CD of your pics and a free gift, as well as your photos, negatives and index print. You can even manage your pictures online, at www.lomography.com, where you'll find a whole Lomo community. See, we said it was fun. ★★★★★

DVD REVIEWS

MEMENTO

★ £14.99 • Certificate 15 • Pathé Distribution
Not many people have seen this but we reckon it's one of the best thrillers in recent years. Guy Pearce plays Leonard Shelby, a man who's hunting the person who raped and murdered his wife in front of him. Unfortunately the trauma has left him with no short-term memory, which means he has to write facts down or tattoo them on his body or else he forgets them. This, combined with the narrative which moves the story back in time slowly makes for a stunning, disturbing and funny film, and it's not often those three adjectives are put together. It might be a one-trick pony, but what a trick.

EXTRA FEATURES Interviews, biographies, tattoo picture gallery, script, plus ability to play scenes in chronological order

★★★★★



**DVD
OF THE MONTH**

BATTLE ROYALE

★ £18.99 • Certificate 18 • Tartan Video

This brilliant blood-soaked exploitation shocker redefines high-concept cinema. Extrapolating on real tensions between older and younger generations in present-day Japan, the film proposes a near-future solution to juvenile misbehaviour – drop a class of trouble-makers on an island and force them to hunt each other to the death in a three-day killing spree. Only one class member can survive, so it's kill or be killed. Beat Takeshi Kitano hams it up nicely as a vengeful and sadistic schoolteacher, and despite a slightly underwhelming extras list, *Battle Royale* remains a must-see for any fan of genre cinema or extreme Japanese culture.

EXTRA FEATURES Star and director filmographies, original theatrical trailer, stills gallery, Mark Wyatt film notes, Asia Extreme trailer reel

★★★★★





SONY NW-E8 WALKMAN

★ £280 • Sony • 08705 111999 • www.sony.co.uk

Technology eh? Just keeps getting smaller and smaller. Take Sony's new NW-E8 Walkman – it's so tiny, it's not even there. How mad is that? All you get is a pair of headphones, and the music magically appears from nowhere. Well, almost – you still need a PC and a USB connection.

The 'phones have a built-in audio-player, thereby cutting out the middle man and getting the music straight from the source, to your ears. As usual, Sony uses its own ATRAC3 format, so if you also want to listen to your MP3s on it, the files needed to be re-encoded before the player will accept them.

Which quite

frankly is a pain.

But, the bonus of ATRAC3 is you get to squeeze in more music, which is a good thing when you've only got 64Mb of memory to play with. And the sound quality is still excellent.

You'll find the controls on the right-hand ear pad, alongside an LCD screen, which displays track information. And with a quick tweak of your ear you skip, search and adjust the volume. OK, so it'll look like you've got a nervous twitch but then with these bandless 'phones stuck to your head, you're gonna look so fly no one will notice. Alternatively they'll think you're completely barking, bopping away to imaginary music and desperately pulling at your ear.

They are also outrageously expensive. But then what price can you place on being at the cutting edge of technology? About £280 apparently.

★★★★★

PLEXTOR PLEXWRITER S88TU

★ £257 • Dabs.com • 0870 429 3010 • www.plextor.com

For some time now Plextor has been the leader in the CD-ROM and CD-RW market, and it has just expanded its range with the rather tasty and portable PlexWriter S88TU. At just 141 x 22 x 171mm it's one of the slimmest models on the market, and also the most stylish. Get it out of your bag and watch your mates ooh and ahh enviously.

However, if you've used USB CD-RW drives in the past chances are you're currently having 'Nam-style flashbacks of slow speeds and buffer underruns. But don't be afraid. The S88TU is compatible with USB 2.0, or High Speed USB – so called because, well, its fast. In fact, it's about 40 times faster than USB 1.1, which was never intended for storage devices like CD-RW drives. So with its 8 x 8 x 24 operating speed you'll be able to burn a CD in around ten minutes. And as it features Sanyo's BURN-Proof technology it eliminates buffer underrun errors so that you don't end up with a pile of useless drinks coasters.

Of course, this means you need a system with USB 2.0 ports to benefit from these high speeds, but as it is also 1.1 compatible, you can still enjoy its good looks and streamlined proportions (at a maximum of 6x writing speed) until you get around to upgrading. ★★★★★



PROPLAY GAMEBOARD

★ £49.99 • ProPlay • 01706 656 633

Tony Hawk's was one of the surprise hits of last year and it's still sitting proudly at number two in the sports' top ten despite the fact that Activision has seen fit to release *Tony Hawk's 3* on all the major consoles, ignoring the hordes of rad PC dudes clamouring for a conversion.

While you wait you might want to cast your eyes over this novelty controller. Shaped like a real-life skateboard the first thing you notice when you climb on board is that it's well built and sturdy enough to jump around on without it snapping. Apparently it takes up to 15 stone without breaking into a sweat, which is more than you can say for most gamepads. It tilts in four directions to give you control

over the on-screen board and comes with a puck that covers all your other button presses.

There is one big problem. The cable to connect it to your PC's USB hub is woefully short, which means that if your PC base sits out of the way you'll probably have to move it to get your board in a decent position in front of your screen. Tsk.

If you can live with that and you really think you are going to use this for more than a week then go for your life – we've seen much, much worse for consoles. It failed the acid test for us though – after a few days larking around it's been relegated to the cupboard where it's destined to spend the rest of its natural life. ★★★★★

BUY ONLINE FROM www.amazon.co.uk amazon.co.uk

VIOLENT COP

★ £18.99 • Certificate 18 • Tokyo Bullet

Of Beat Takeshi's earlier films, this stands out as one of his most successful and enjoyable. The Japanese actor, TV star, comedian and acclaimed international filmmaker has been experimenting with the gangster genre for most of his directing career, and *Violent Cop* is no exception, as he tells a story of corrupt cops and yakuza vengeance in his idiosyncratically indirect and disjointed style. His own starring performance is typically understated and mesmerising, especially when he explodes into sudden cold-blooded violence. Not quite up to the standard of later masterpieces such as *Hana-Bi*, this is nevertheless required viewing.

EXTRA FEATURES Theatrical trailers, extensive biographies and filmographies, scene selection, fully interactive moving menus, production stills gallery

★★★★★

FINAL FANTASY: THE SPIRITS WITHIN

★ £19.99 • Certificate PG • Columbia

Despite being slated by critics the world over, it's hard not to like this. Everything in the film is completely computer-generated although the characters leave a lot to be desired, lip-synching is rough in places and Ming-Na, who voices Dr Aki Ross, does go a bit over the top. The story is, in a word, silly, but again it's all good clean fun and although it has nothing to do with the games, if you're a fan of them or anything mildly sci-fi-related, you would have to be a cruel man indeed not to like something in what is a genuinely enjoyable film with some stunning extra features.

EXTRA FEATURES Commentaries, trailers, 3D interactive documentary, 17 featurettes, music video, spoof outtakes, Aki photo-shoot, character files, concept art, re-edit features, DVD-ROM extras and more...

★★★★★

THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

★ £19.99 • Certificate 15 • BBC Worldwide Publishing

Arthur Dent has 'one of those days' when his home, and in fact the whole Earth is destroyed to make way for a hyperspace bypass. Luckily for him, Arthur is saved by Ford Prefect, an old friend who just so happens to be an intergalactic traveller and meets up with all sorts of weird characters including the two-headed Zaphod Beeblebrox, Marvin the paranoid android and a cow that's bred to encourage people to eat it. Definitely the most interesting time anyone has ever had while still wearing their dressing gown and still worth a damn good look today.

EXTRA FEATURES The making of... documentary, deleted scenes, original trailer, interview with Douglas Adams

★★★★★

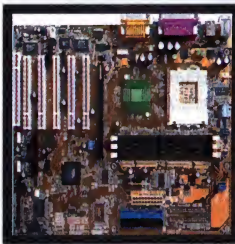


BUYER'S GUIDE

Are you looking to upgrade your PC? Since we've started this Buyer's Guide, prices have dropped consistently every month. If you're looking for a bit of extra zip, you can get it for a lot less than you might have thought. Memory is dirt cheap as well – if you're still labouring with less than 128Mb RAM then buy some now

MOTHERBOARD

BEST BUY



ASUS A7V266-E

STREET PRICE £155 inc VAT

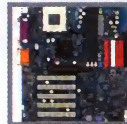
MANUFACTURER Asus

TELEPHONE N/A **WEBSITE** www.asus.com

After the rather lacklustre performance of VIA's first DDR chipset, the KT266, we are now seeing boards trickle through featuring the much improved KT266A. The Asus A7V266-E will take PC2100 DDR memory running on the ultra-fast 266MHz bus and should represent a hefty performance hike over the previous Best Buy based on the older KT133A chipset. A fast hard drive controller, six USB slots, optional six-channel audio on board and full support for Athlon XP processors rounds up an excellent package from a reliable motherboard manufacturer.

~~£189~~
£155

BEST BUDGET



GIGABYTE GA-7ZXR REV 3

STREET PRICE £92 inc VAT

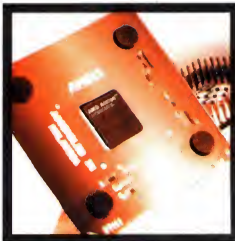
MANUFACTURER Gigabyte

TELEPHONE 01908 362700
WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk

The GA-7ZXR is similar to the ABIT KT-7A-RAID, taking Socket A Athlon processors to 1.4GHz and offering support for up to 4 ATA-100 RAID and 4 ATA-100 IDE devices. It even has four-channel audio on board courtesy of the Creative Labs CT5880 PCI chipset.

PROCESSOR

BEST BUY



AMD ATHLON XP 1700+

STREET PRICE £129 inc VAT

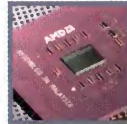
MANUFACTURER AMD

TELEPHONE N/A **WEBSITE** www.amd.com

The Athlon XP processors are named after the clockspeed of Intel processors it claims to beat. The 1700+ actually runs at a clockspeed of 1.47GHz, and with new so-called QuantiSpeed architecture, more on-chip cache and souped-up 3DNow! instruction set, it offers superb performance in a range of applications – not least games. While the 1800+ is currently the fastest processor in the range, the 1700+ is good value for money. Ensure your Socket A motherboard has an updated BIOS and correctly rated components to run an XP processor before you fork out.

~~£149~~
£129

BEST BUDGET



DURON 1000

STREET PRICE £55

MANUFACTURER AMD

TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.amd.com

Durons are basically Athlons with smaller Level 2 (L2) processor caches. This still compares favourably with Intel's ageing Celeron chip cache structure. Besides, Duron still has the blistering Floating Point Unit (FPU) mathematical calculation speed, making it a top processor for gamers.

~~£89~~
£55

HARD DRIVE

BEST BUY



SEAGATE BARRACUDA ATA IV 60GB

STREET PRICE £113 inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Seagate

TELEPHONE 01628 890 366 **WEBSITE** www.seagate.com

We have a new Best Buy hard drive – the 60Gb Seagate Barracuda ATA IV. The IBM Deskstar 75GXP drives are looking a bit long in the tooth alongside this modern beastie. Although it's a 7,200 RPM drive, it runs both cooler and quieter than its peers. Fully loaded with a 2Mb cache, the performance is solid across the board, both in terms of average seek times and sustained data throughput. We recommend the 60Gb drive on the basis that it seems pretty good value for money, though the range also offers 20, 40 and 80Gb variants.

~~£129~~
£113

BEST BUDGET

NEW ENTRY



SEAGATE U SERIES 6 40Gb

STREET PRICE £70 inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Seagate

TELEPHONE 01628 890366
WEBSITE www.seagate.com

The U Series 5 drives are now pretty much unavailable, but is replaced in the Buyer's Guide by its own replacement. The U Series 6 drive has much the same spec as the Series 5, but runs quieter and cooler. We've also uprated capacity to 40Gb – this is great value.

~~£89~~
£70

MONITOR

BEST BUY



IYYAMA VM PRO 512 22in

STREET PRICE £652

MANUFACTURER iiyama

TELEPHONE 01438 745482 **WEBSITE** www.iiyama.co.uk

Our long-standing Best Buy monitor, the VM Pro 510, is superseded by the 512. Equipped with the latest Mitsubishi aperture grille Diamondtron screen, it has a rather smaller viewable area than suggested, closer to 20 inches than 22, but gives outstanding results at resolutions up to 2048 x 1536 at 85Hz, something many graphics cards can't even support. If your video card has the bandwidth, you can rely on this monitor to give you pin-sharp results at 1600 x 1200. There's also the useful inclusion of a four-port USB hub and even a pair of (albeit tinny) speakers.

NEW ENTRY

BEST BUDGET



HANSOL 710P 17in

STREET PRICE £151 inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Hansol

TELEPHONE 01252 360400
WEBSITE www.hansol-uk.com

For the budget-conscious gamer in need of a monitor, Hansol is a company well worth a look. With a fabulously low price, it will handle 1024 x 768 with a vertical refresh rate of 85Hz, and 1600 x 1200 at a creditable 75Hz. There's not a lot that'll touch this for the money.

~~£189~~
£151

GRAPHICS CARD

BEST BUDGET



VIDEOLOGIC VIVID!XS 32MB
STREET PRICE £80 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE 01923 277488
WEBSITE www.videologic.com



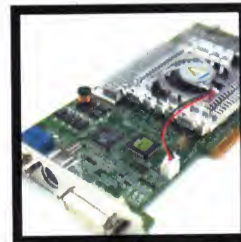
The new Kryo II chipset blows its slower Kryo brethren to smithereens at 175MHz clock speed as opposed to 115MHz. The 32Mb Vivid!XS replaces the Hercules 3D Prophet 4500 as Best Budget Buy – but only just, there's barely anything to choose between the two.

BEST BUY

CREATIVE LABS GEFORCE 3 TITANIUM 500

STREET PRICE £294 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A **WEBSITE** www.europe.creative.com

Of the 'new' Titanium products from NVIDIA, the pick of the bunch is the 500, as it's the only one that gives better performance than its predecessor, the plain ol' GeForce 3. The core clock has been upped to 240MHz from 200MHz, and the memory now runs at 500MHz (DDR) as opposed to 460MHz. Not only that, but the new 0.15 micron manufacturing process makes the cards cheaper to produce too. Creative's clearly blasted ahead in the latest round of ZONE bench tests – and since we've yet to see the new Radeon cards, they're out of the picture...



SOUNDCARD

BEST BUDGET



HERCULES GAMESURROUND FORTISSIMO II
STREET PRICE £36 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
PHONE (020) 8686 5600
WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com

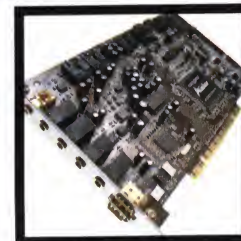
This four-channel audio card represents excellent value for money and its DirectSound 3D support is gib-tastic. You can even get four channels of surround sound from your DVD movies with a special version of PowerDVD!

BEST BUY

CREATIVE LABS SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY PLAYER

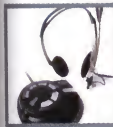
STREET PRICE £82 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A **WEBSITE** www.europe.creative.com

The SonicFury gets pipped to the post by the excellent new Audigy Player from Creative Labs. Successor to the very successful Sound Blaster Live! series, the Audigy has an audio engine four times as powerful, excellent audio quality, and a range of features that makes it the most versatile all-round gaming/music/dvd sound card. EAX Advanced HD adds a range of new 3D audio features, though it'll be a while before games filter through with support for the more esoteric options. It's about £20 more expensive than its main competition, but well worth it.



HEADPHONES

BEST BUDGET



MICROSOFT GAMEVOICE USB
STREET PRICE £49.99 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100 **WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com/sidewinder/

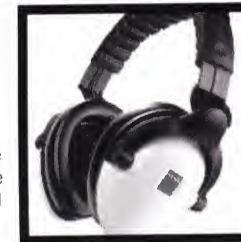
So how can a set of budget headphones cost more than our current Best Buy? It's simple really – the GameVoice enables you to talk to your mates over the Internet. It works very well, and as they double as a more than decent set of headphones, they're a bit of a bargain.

BEST BUY

SENNHEISER HD 200 MASTER

STREET PRICE £45
MANUFACTURER Sennheiser
TELEPHONE 01494 551 551 **WEBSITE** www.sennheiser.co.uk

This German audio company has been around for more than 50 years, founded by the suitably Teutonic-sounding Dr Fritz Sennheiser. The HD200s are actually targeted at DJs, and for good reason. They're very, very loud. They're very, very strong. They have a closed back design, meaning you can hear nearby rocket jumpers comfortably while her indoors has *EastEnders* turned up high enough so she can hear it from the kitchen. And, crucially for extended gaming sessions, they're comfortable and light, weighing around 140g. A great pair of cans at a top price.



CDRW DRIVES

BEST BUDGET



TEAC CDW58EK 8X8X32
STREET PRICE £72 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Teac
TELEPHONE 01923 225235
WEBSITE www.teac.co.uk

I've just had to buy a load of CD/RW drives and these Teac drives were dead cheap, easy to install and have worked without a hitch. Bearing in mind my first CD-RW drive cost me well over £250 and was flaky and slow, these babies are a good deal. Shop around and you're laughing...

BEST BUY

PLEXTOR 16/10/40A

STREET PRICE £115 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Plextor
TELEPHONE +32 2 725 5522 **WEBSITE** www.plextor.com

We've been running Plextor CDs, DVDs and CD-Rs for years in our machines and they're a) bulletproof and b) fast as anything you'll get within a few quid of the asking price. This is a brand new drive that is dead fast, offers Sanyo Burnproof technology and is competitively priced alongside some good contenders from Yamaha and Mirai. It comes with WinOnCD (nowhere near as good as Nero but proven) and offers CD-R, CD-RW and fast CD-Read performance. I'd upgrade, but my ancient SCSI 6x Plextor CD-R still cuts the mustard – three years on...



JOYSTICKS

BEST BUDGET



SAITEK CYBORG 3D GOLD
STREET PRICE £45
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE 01454 451900
WEBSITE www.saitek.co.uk

Saitek's current generation of sticks are fabulous. The Cyborg Gold is a top-line USB stick that excels across the board. The design is superb, both strong and adjustable – even lefties are catered for – and its response and accuracy are unequalled, even among more pricey competition.

BEST BUY

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER FORCEFEEDBACK 2

STREET PRICE £62 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/products/hardware/sidewinder/sidewinder.htm

Force-feedback products aren't everyone's cup of tea, but nothing comes close to the SideWinder FF2. It's a huge, heavy tabletop affair, with the power transformer built into the base. An infrared sensor causes the stick to leap to attention when you grasp it. The force-feedback routines work extremely well – mainly because the motors are so powerful. If more games made better use of the technology, it would be a must-have piece of gear.





Send us a sob story and

WIN A SET

courtesy of TDK

WIN!

TAKE

OF SPEAKERS

If someone asked you whether your PC would benefit from a set of XS-IV S80s, you'd probably look at them for a few seconds before walking away with a worried look on your face. You'd be missing out because despite the scary name, TDK's XS-IVs are one of the best sub and satellite speaker sets we've listened to.

The build quality and design is right at the top end of the PC market, as you can see for yourself, with thin panel speaker technology ensuring that your desktop looks as good as it sounds. The flat

panel satellites also incorporate NXT SurfaceSound™ technology, which provides a broader 'sweet spot' than conventional speakers, and complement the pipe subwoofer perfectly. If you don't understand what we're talking about then put the words 'good', 'they' and 'sound' in a different order and you'll get the idea.

But don't just take our word for it. Enter this simple

competition, and if you're one of the 12 lucky winners drawn from the Editor's fashionable hat, then your

desktop could become the envy of hi-fi enthusiasts the world over.

HOW TO WIN

The trouble with most competitions is that they don't address the fact that prizes should go to those in need. With that in mind we've decided to make sure that the TDK speakers go to a deserving home, and to prove that you're a genuine case we want you to send us a postcard or email us with your sob story. In no more than 50 words (and we will be ruthless – entries with 51 words or more will be

disqualified) you have to convince us that your life would be enriched by a set of XS-IVs. Extra artistic flourishes such as rhyming couplets will be taken into account but are not necessary.

Send your pathetic missives to this address:

'I might be sad but I want your speakers'

PC ZONE

**30 Cleveland Street
London, W1T 4JD**

Or email them to:

speakers@pczone.co.uk

**The closing date is Thursday
March 7 2002.**

★ Terms and conditions: only entries with all the questions completed and received before the closing date will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. And all that. Phew!

TDK®

at the heart of it

TDK

ENDZONE

Driven by you

★ END ZONE EDITOR Rhianna Pratchett



Welcome to the last ever End Zone column. No I'm not off to market my own range of mutated dominatrix

Barbie dolls, complete with their own torture accessories (you think I'm kidding?). No, in fact End Zone, like the rest of the mag, is undergoing a massive facelift as of next month. It's going to be geared towards your gaming needs and queries, incorporating Cheatmaster, Mailbox, Feedback, Watchdog and the revival of our essential gaming and software strategy guides. You will also notice a new section in Mailbox entitled Hot Topic, where we give you the opportunity to give feedback in the PCZONE forum (www.pczone.co.uk). It's already under way in the forum so get in there and give us your thoughts.

You'll still find all the top ZONE regulars like On The CD, Extended Play, Mod Reviews and Comment, plus a few little extra treats. Paul Presley will be getting to grips with learning how to use in-game editing tools and map-makers, and each month he's going to give you the lowdown on what to do with all the add-ons and extras that you've never known what to do with before. On a personal level I'm looking forward to the new 'Games That Changed The World' feature, not only because it's responsible for bringing back the talents of a certain Mr Paul Mallinson, but because it's high time respect is paid to the games that dared to be different.

YOUR HOSTS



Adam Phillips



Phil Wand

CHEATMASTER

You know you want to really

★ SHOWING YOU THE WAY Rhianna Pratchett

NEED HELP?

If your problems persist, all you need to do to solve them is...

WRITE TO Dear Rhianna/Cheat Master, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with Dear Rhianna or Cheat Master in the subject line

GOTHIC

Xicat Interactive

In the Gothic game folder locate the 'gothic.ini' file with Notepad and change the 'test mode 0' line to 'test mode 1' to activate the cheat mode. Then use the following keys to activate the cheats.

- F2 Console
- F3 Play in windows mode
- F4 Normal mode
- F5 Immobile camera
- F6 Mobile camera
- F7 Cycle through game sections
- F8 Health and mana refresh
- H Character harms himself
- Z Character spins around
- K Character vanishes

Hit '~' to bring down the console screen and activate these further cheats:

- cheat god God mode
- cheat full Full health
- hurtswampschark Swampschark is hurt
- harpie Summon Harpie

- lurker Summon Lurker
- lichtbringer Summon quest artefact
- goto vob/goto waypoint Teleport
- goto pos Teleport to the castle
- print Take a screenshot
- load position Load position
- load game Load game
- save Save game

ROBOT WARS: ARENAS OF DESTRUCTION

BBC Multimedia

To gain money: in the start-up screen type in your name as JPEARCE to get a nice wad of cash.

COMANCHE 4

NovaLogic

To unlock all of the missions type in your pilot name as 'WolfBlitz'.



④ Free as a giant metal bird.

WARZONE 2100

Sold Out

Press T and type the following codes and hit Enter after each one (you need the 1.01 patch for these to work).

- get off my land Kills all enemy units
- toggle timer Stop/start timer
- show me the power/whale fin Give 1000 extra power
- work harder Completes topics that are being researched
- hallo mien schatz Skip to next mission
- double up Units are twice as tough
- kill selected Kills current selected units
- easy Selects the easy difficulty level
- normal Selects the normal difficulty level
- hard Selects the hard difficulty level
- how fast Displays game speed
- carol vorderman displays a programmer message
- biffer baker Makes units almost indestructible
- john kettlely Toggles weather conditions
- shakey Screen shakes when units explode
- sparkle green Gives you stronger unites

STUPID COMPETITION

Where cheating and pointlessness are qualities to be admired

So you fancy yourself as a bit of a cheat master do you? Well, here's your chance to prove it by entering our Stupid Compo. All you have to do to enter is send us your most pointless cheats. If we think your cheat is stupid enough, we'll not only print it and your name, we'll also send you the most ridiculous prize we can find in the PC ZONE prize cupboard.

Please send your cheats, with the title Stupid Compo, a brief description of what they (allegedly) do,

along with your name and address, to letters@pczone.co.uk.

This month's stupid compo winner is Paul Matthey from Reading with his cheat for Rollercoaster Tycoon. If you change the name of one of your guests to Damon Hill they whiz round on the Go-Karts twice as fast. Well Paul you lucky thing you, you'll be able to whiz round Daikatana twice as fast now, as you've won this strategy guide.



WATCHDOG

We're fighting for your rights

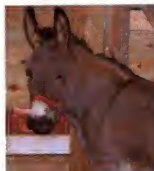
P122



DEAR WANDY

The doctor is in

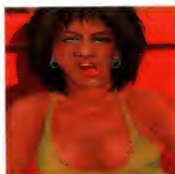
P124



RETROZONE

Paul Presley gets misty-eyed

P138



EXTENDED PLAY

Maps and missions for *Serious Sam* and *Deus Ex*

P140



screen and then quit out of your game. Restart and then reload your game. You'll discover that the majority of the time your fellow computer bidders will have pulled out leaving the goodies for you.

MYTH III: THE WOLF AGE

Take 2 Interactive

Press the following keys during the game to activate these cheats.

'Ctrl' + 'Alt' + 'Numpad +'

'Ctrl' + 'Alt' + 'Numpad -'

INDUSTRY GIANT

JoWood

Money cheat:

While in info mode, click on any of the towns. Then click on rename and type in 'Scrooge' which will give you a nifty 50 million to play with.

METAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT (SP DEMO)

Electronic Arts

Right-click on the *MOFH:AA* short cut and select 'Properties' and in the

'Target' box add the following to the end of the command-line parameter: '+set ui_console 1 +set cheats 1 +set thereisnomonkey 1'. When in the game hit '~' to bring up the console screen and type the following codes:

fullheal Gain full health
dog Activates god mode
wuss Gain all weapons and ammo
noclip No clipping (go through walls)
notarget Show game version

HARRY POTTER & THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

Electronic Arts

Type the following codes during the game to activate the cheats:

HarrySuperJump Super jump
HarryNormaJump Big jump
HarryTriggerCheat Get 15 beans
HarryGetsFullHealth Full health
HarryDebugModeOn Debug mode (all levels) G F7 to clear

S.W.I.N.E

Fishtank

Open the console window by holding down Shift and Enter and type the following codes:

mo money Gain 1000 credits
quicker than death Enemy units are killed with one shot
smarten Ranking increase for selected unit
blitzkrieg Skip level
Instant delivery Get units faster

MONOPOLY TYCOON

Infogrames

Top Tip: to help you win a property auction at the lowest price, save your game as soon as you get into an auction



DEAR RHIANNA

Rhianna Pratchett dries your gaming tears

Q I am completely stuck on *Commandos 2*, on the Target: Burma mission - I can't kill the Tyrant at the end of the mission. I get the Ghurka to use the radio but I get killed by the incoming troops. I've tried setting my men up to fight but they're easily overpowered. Please help as I was really enjoying the game and now all my friends are ahead of me!

Sam Tetlow, via email

A There are a few ways to deal with this problem. One way is to hide

everyone, including the spiritual leader, near the barge and then use Duke to take out the tyrant with a single shot. You'll need to get him to climb the lamp post to get into the best position. When he's been eliminated get all your commandos and the spiritual leader into the barge. Alternatively you can go for the maximum carnage approach by hiding most of your commandos and using Thread and a whole load of Molotov cocktails and gas grenades.

Put a few Ghurkas near the end of your bridge and hide Thread near the barge. Have him lob cocktails and grenades onto the oncoming soldiers, while your Ghurkas pick off any that get past him.

Q I'm playing *Monopoly Tycoon* and I'm finding it impossible to finish the fourth mission. If I don't build many businesses, I save money, lose less at 6am, but make nothing. If I build lots, I lose loads at 6am and can't make a decent profit! And somehow, my opponents win the game with a couple of shops and an apartment block within a day or two. Is there something I am doing wrong?

Graham Rutland, via email

A Remember this mission is about profit rather than straightforward cash in hand, so don't be too worried about going into a little bit of debt. Boardwalk can bring in a pretty good daily turnover as can building shopping centres and leasing them on some of the cheaper properties. The best way to deal with it is to build as much as you can just after midnight, even if this means running up a debt, because you've got the rest of the day to make it back.



Elephant conkers.

READERS' TIPS

You're bad, you are...

Have you found that little corner of a game that can be exploited mercilessly? Well write in to Dear Rhianna, share it with the rest of the world and get your name immortalised forever in the mag.

SETTLERS IV

For an easy win, open up the magic.cfg file (with Notepad) and change your spell settings. You can change the radius of the spells and length of time and cost. You can also change the Mana per big temple and donation settings so the computer player(s) also receives that much. Keep a back-up of the file and create three edit versions (one for each race).

Graham Williams, via email

BLACK & WHITE

In *Black & White* if your creature is a bit puny and pathetic, search for a white mushroom, feed it to him, leave a pile by his area and chain him up. Leave him to gorge himself overnight and when you come back in the morning you should find he's huge!

Philip Drysdale, via email

WATCHDOG

Resist the urge to buy an Uzi on the black market and go round to that company that's been ripping you off – avoid prison by writing to us instead...

★ DEMANDING SOME ANSWERS Adam Phillips



ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Don't worry – we're here to help when you've reached the end of your tether. If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line.

WRITE TO Watchdog, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1T 4JD

EMAIL Alternatively, email us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading Watchdog

WHO TO BLAME?

Q What follows is a letter sent to PC makers Evesham by Mrs Sarah Jones, who is one of our readers:

'I regret having to email you but after an unsuccessful call with your customer care

team, I feel I have no option. In summary, what follows is an appeal to your sympathetic nature in the hope that you will intervene, so that we might finally obtain a computer that meets our needs.

'My husband has always previously ordered Dell

computers and this year before upgrading again, he decided to research his options. Following some very good press regarding your company, he decided on Evesham and, embracing the new world of 'Internet shopping', ordered our new system through your website.

'After two incorrect credit agreements – blamed on your own "new" computer system by your own operators – we were finally in a position to return the signed agreement on October 8 2001.

'Mid-morning Friday last (October 19), the

evesham
com

① Evesham – a reputable company but have they short-changed the Joneses?

system was safely delivered. The following day it was installed by my husband. Naturally, to register the system, he logged on to your website and while there decided to look at the available upgrades/add-ons, being impressed already with the system – although not the service – provided. Imagine his frustration at realising the system he was using was already out of date and that you were now selling a model with Windows XP, a 60GB hard drive and a CD writer for approximately £30 more than the 24-hour-old system he'd only just installed.

'I quickly calmed his nerves and assured him that if I rang your customer care line the



➔ Even the most kick-ass PCs can be superseded in a matter of days...

PC WOES

PC World is in the doghouse, again...

Q A friend of mine has been having some problems with the infamous PC World. It all started at the PCW Norwich branch on August 27 2001. Richard, my friend, bought their Advent laptop. Including an extended warranty, he spent £1,948. He decided to take out the 'buy now/pay later' option as two grand is a lot of money.

Once home, Richard discovered that the DVD drive didn't work. He called the MasterCare hotline and explained the problem. I sussed the problem though – the drivers were incorrectly installed so MC arranged a pick-up.

Securicor picked up the laptop a week later on September 7. After two weeks of waiting, Richard phoned MC to see what the problem was. To his astonishment, MC hadn't even received the laptop! He gave it another week to ensure the

laptop had been delivered and then contacted MC again. They still had no record of the laptop ever arriving.

So he went to Securicor's local depot in Staines and gave them the consignment number. A very helpful branch manager took Richard round the warehouse to look for his laptop which was nowhere to be seen. The manager told Richard to get back in contact with MC, which he did. Still no laptop.

At this point, he asked me to take over as he no longer had the strength or the time – he was studying for exams (for which he needed a laptop). At this point, we both got back in contact with Securicor and they told us that the laptop was being held for enquiries on the delivery address, and that since both parties had no record of the laptop, he assumed that it must have been stolen.



④ PC World are back on the pages of Watchdog.

Richard then phoned MC back with the new information and they then proceeded to tell him that their claims department would ensure that Securicor sent out a claim form.

That was on September 30. He has received no claim form from either Securicor or MC, which prompted me to write a letter to MC on his behalf. We gave them a compulsory ten days to reply to the letter or we would take matters further.

The ten days came and went but Richard decided to give it a little longer. Eventually, 23 days later, he received a letter from MasterCare by second-class post. The letter thanked him for

his recent correspondence and stated: 'This is currently being investigated and a reply will be sent in due course.'

The letter was dated October 31 2001. That's the last we heard from them. Since then Richard has logged the 'stolen' laptop with the police and has received a crime number. It is now November 21 and we have still had no letters, claim forms or phone calls from either MC or Securicor.

I have since written another letter to MC reiterating the problems and that several third parties also now know about the situation and that legal advice is being taken.

Gary Martin

A A crime number? That's a first for these pages. We asked Jon Brett, PC World's press bod, to have a look round and see if they could find your mate's laptop.

According to Jon, the issue was resolved at the Norwich store on December 8. Your mate should have been given a new computer by now: "It would appear that the courier company lost the computer and we are chasing that up with them," says Jon. "We apologised to the customer for the delay."

We're glad that your situation has been resolved. We're none too impressed though that PC World took three months to pull their finger out. Not what you would call reassuring customer care by any stretch. We can't help but think that if you hadn't mentioned that third parties had become involved, your mate Richard might still be sitting there waiting for someone to ring with a solution. But we are sceptics here at Watchdog...

following Monday morning, I was sure that we would be offered some help! Wrong.

We were courteously told that we could not return our system and that really we were on our own. I understand that legally we have no recourse and I am not the kind of person to make those threats anyway.

"What I had hoped for was someone who could see our predicament and agree that if they were in our shoes, they would feel somewhat sick. While I fully appreciate that the computer market more than any other never stands still, 24 hours

"Imagine our frustration at realising our 24-hour-old system was already out of date"

THE JONESES FIND IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO KEEP UP

does seem a little ambitious even for yourselves.

"I too work for a large customer-facing company and can appreciate that your business is to make money and that the philosophy of the customer is king is somewhat outdated. I had hoped to attempt negotiation, offering to pay the difference between our 24-hour-old system and your new spec for the £30, returning the 40Gb hard drive to you first – but this was rejected.

"I would be grateful if you could intervene and restore my husband's faith in your company. I await your response with hopeful anticipation."

A An interesting conundrum and an understandably frustrating one for you and your hubby, Sarah. We asked Evesham for their take on the situation: "We build our PCs to order and have to buy in the parts, including the hard drives and the licence for the software," says Evesham's Carolyn Worth. "These costs are paid by us up front. We then sell a PC based on what we paid for the parts and the advertised price. What Mrs Jones is asking for is a substantial additional upgrade to her PC – the costs would include a new software licence and a new hard drive, both of which would be additional costs on top of what she has already received."

Worth explained that you would not be "amused if we were to contact her to ask if she could pay just a little extra as our suppliers had put the prices up. She would quite rightly point out that she had agreed to pay a certain price and she would insist on having

her PC at that price. And we would gladly supply her, even at a loss to ourselves, because we made a deal with our customer – we were one of the few companies to resist putting a surcharge on PCs when memory was scarce because we appreciate that a deal is a deal."

Evesham say that they continually negotiate with their suppliers to get the best price they can and when they get price changes, they pass them on to their customers. "However, our suppliers charge us for what we buy and

to continue supplying cutting-edge technology at a reasonable price, we have to reflect our costs in the costs paid by our customers," concluded Carolyn.

While Watchdog does appreciate how annoying it is to have something appear out of date as soon as you receive it (and the probable delay caused by the two incorrect credit agreements wouldn't have helped this), the constant evolution of the PC industry is ferociously quick at times and therefore so are the deals on offer from retailers, which can change overnight. That's why whenever we order a system, we never go and look at the latest models on sale when ours finally turns up – it would invariably be depressing. Perhaps we should all go out and buy an Xbox instead!

GRAPHICALLY GRATING

Q I decided to buy myself a Radeon 8500, which I got from Scan for £234. My problems started as soon as I'd installed the card. I installed it according to the ATI manual instructions and instantly, this caused problems. Windows wouldn't work properly, and the games – *Black & White*, *Ground Control* and *Homeworld: Cataclysm* – wouldn't run at all.

So then I emailed ATI and they gave me a suggestion on how to reinstall the drivers but this



Q Companies like Scan are not responsible for graphics card drivers.



Q The Radeon 8500 has been a nightmare for one reader.

completely killed the system. Every time I tried to get to the display settings to change them, the screen kept going black, which then turned to splotchy coloured blocks with characters in them.

I had to reformat the machine in order to clear up the problem. Again I followed ATI's installation instructions and again, Windows didn't work properly – making even more things not work. So I reformatted my machine for the second time. I then installed the graphics drivers

could swap it for a similarly priced GF3 because I just couldn't get the Radeon to work with my system.

Their response was that if I sent it back, they would charge a 25 per cent restocking fee if the card turned out not to be faulty. However I don't think that the card is faulty – the drivers just won't work on my machine, whatever ATI suggest. So Scan will take it and test it and find it works on a test system. They'll then charge me over £50 for the privilege of having a week without a computer and spending more than 20 hours of my time trying to sort it out.

The drivers are an integral part of the product that Scan

gaming use, they prove to be unstable," says Scan. "The card in question is newly released and is subject to many fixes and patches to make it compatible with games. Mr Wilbraham wrongly assumes that the drivers are the responsibility of the reseller. They are not. It lies with the manufacturer and not the reseller. The responsibility to get all the latest fixes and upgrades for a product lies with the customer."

Scan says they are seeking better ways to aid customers through detailed FAQs made available to punters prior to them ordering kit, "but these are no substitute for a



Q We haven't been sent an 8500 for review, so we can't comment on any driver issues.

not using the ATI software but by the 'old-fashioned' way through Windows, telling it to pick up the drivers from the disc.

This finally worked in as much as giving me a stable Windows system at least, but my games

provided and I am wholly dissatisfied with them because the drivers don't seem happy with my system.

Mark Wilbraham

A We contacted the support people at Scan who told us the following: "There is a

customer's own research into what components are suited for their specific purpose."

As a gesture of goodwill though, they say they have arranged to replace your card for an alternative based on their recommendations without you incurring a restocking fee. Now you can't say fairer than. **EW**

"I am wholly dissatisfied with Scan as their drivers don't seem happy with my system"

MARK WILBRAHAM GETS DRIVEN MAD

still have the same problems as listed above. If I leave my machine for a while and it goes to sleep (standby), when I move the mouse to restart it, the screen is completely black with white lines down it.

It took me over a week to get to this unsatisfactory stage, in which time I was without a computer that was in any fit state to run. I was seriously hacked off and informed Scan about the problem – eight days after the purchase – and asked them if I

grey area in giving an exact definition as to what is 'faulty', 'incompatible' and 'customer's incompetence', explains Scan. "Hence the reason why many companies have 'no fault found' charges and restocking fees. These are in place to avoid companies making losses because of customer negligence."

They say in your case that there is clearly a compatibility issue: "The components alone work fine but, for certain

READ ME

If you are writing into complain about a product, please furnish us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs, make sure that you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.

DEAR WANDY

It's another bulging sack of computer wretchedness. Can Wandy wave his hands o' magic and make everyone happy before bedtime?

★ NERF HERDER Phil Wand

GOT A QUERY, DEARIE?

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WRITE TO Dear Wandy, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD

EMAIL Address your letters to us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading Dear Wandy

Please note: while we can assure you that we read every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Also, please do not phone. Thanks.

CRASH & LEARN

Q I have a crisis on my hands. I can't play any games. When I try to run them, they just crash. I recently bought *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* and *Max Payne*. And yes, both crash. I've tried all my other titles with no joy. I've downloaded all the latest patches and all the latest video card drivers but things keep crashing left, right and centre. I have an AMD Athlon 1.33 with 256Mb RAM, 64Mb NVIDIA GeForce2 MX 400. Help me, please.

Paul Rawnsley

A This is a lesson to other readers thinking of writing in for help: always explain the problem in detail. If your games crash when you start them up, tell me. If they crash when swapping video modes – when your monitor goes 'click' – say so. If you're picking up Jazz FM in Microsoft Word and your mouse only works when you're shouting, I want to know. That way I can try and work out what's wrong (and if you're talking bollocks). In Paul's case, it could be anything from a memory chip on the fritz to a corrupted install of Microsoft's perennially imperfect operating system – which one, I don't know, because he didn't tell me. Unless I know fundamentals like that plus the symptoms of the illness, there's bugger all chance of finding out what's gone wrong. The only assistance I can give here is in the form of

general advice: when you're dealing with games, make sure they have comfortable surroundings in which to live. That means making sure you have the latest release version of DirectX, available from windowsupdate.microsoft.com and that you have uninstalled and reinstalled the correct video drivers – preferably from the board manufacturer. Note that I said uninstall before reinstall: you must always return to 640 x 480 chunky mode in advance of using the latest set.

VIDEO HEAVE HO

Q After two years, it has finally come to pass that I need a new graphics card. My system is based around an AMD K6 350

“I'm left with an expensive white elephant and an inability to play games”

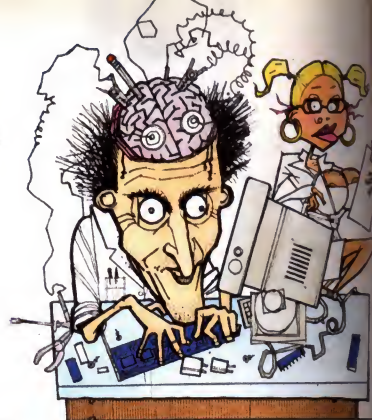
MARK WILBRAHAM ASKS ARE ATI DRIVERS JUST CRAP?

with 256Mb RAM and a Voodoo3 2000. I only have available PCI slots and was wondering what the best PCI video card is. The 3D Prophet 4500 looks impressive, however, the T&L problem, plus my low processor speed, worries me somewhat. I've also seen the GeForce 400 cards but would these give me a significant improvement over my Voodoo? Unfortunately I do not have the funds to buy a new motherboard and processor. Any advice on this difficult area would be useful.

Anon

A You are right in that your CPU is getting a little long in the tooth. In all honesty, I don't believe changing your video card would achieve very much (if anything at all). The oldest machine I have in my possession is a home-brew 450MHz PIII with a TNT2 Ultra, and it is hatefully, tragically, slow. Whenever a new video card comes in for review, the case comes off, the TNT2 is fished out and the new boy dropped in just to see if it can transform the snoozing old mule into a Grand National

winner. But it never does. And so I fear that if you were to go and spend your wad of dog-eared fivers on a spanking new card – let's say, for argument's sake, a £65 GeForce2 MX PCI – the system underneath it would just strangle it, and you would end up deeply resentful at the thought that you'd opened your wallet and paid cash for the experience. In short, the card you have at the moment is a fine match for the rest of your hardware, and I would save up for a new motherboard and processor before you do anything else. Remember, a 1GHz Duron can be bought for the same money.



☛ Cable modem good. Normal modem bad.

kicking. Only people with styrofoam cups and a wet piece of string can get any slower. So definitely you want to find out whether you're in a broadband area, and at the very least pester BT for an ISDN connection. Then your system will be truly worth the outlay.

ATYPICAL ATI

Q I'm contacting you with a problem concerning my new ATI Radeon 8500. I hunted the card down for weeks, paid an extortionate amount of dosh for it, and now I find that pretty much every game freezes with it. Before I bought it, it had rave reviews about its performance and I reckon it could be the biggest card out there. Now that I look at the newsgroups a bit more, I find lots of people reporting the same freezing problems and plenty of other glitches. I've contacted the ATI tech support – they are slow in responding and have sent me ideas that haven't worked – and still I'm left with an expensive white elephant and an inability to play games. I'm going to try a full reformat next, I think, to ensure that any old drivers are wiped from my system. Do you think that this will work or are ATI drivers just crap? My system:



☛ Wandy's old PIII takes some time off after opening the Start menu.

Asus A7M266 mobo, 384Mb 266RAM, Windows 98SE, SonicFury soundcard, Athlon Thunderbird. Please help Obi-Wan Kenobi, you are my only hope...

Mark Wilbraham

A First things first: the Radeon 8500 is slower playing *Quake III* than the GeForce3 Ti 500, and level-pegs a plain vanilla GeForce3. If we're talking *Unreal Tournament*, even a fuddy-duddy old GeForce2 will outrun it, so I'm not quite sure how or where you did your homework. Next time ask Wendy before you buy. Aside from a slap on the wrist, I do believe you have run into the reason I will never, ever buy an ATI card: drivers. They are a curse (or, to use your own terminology, crap). So I don't think a reformat or a reinstall of Windows will be of any help as the cause of the problem will remain the same. You could try reverting to a 640 x 480 standard VGA driver and then installing the latest set from the ATI website (which at the time of writing has yet to gain full Microsoft certification), but I'll put money on it failing to cure your grief. More likely an upgrade to Windows 2000 Professional will help, but I'm not sure that's what you want to hear as it involves throwing money at something that's already cost you a proverbial arm and leg. Advertise the card in the back of your local paper, have a quick thumb through our Buyers' Guide and go get yourself a replacement...

VOLT DO YOU WANT?

Q I was wondering if you could please tell whether or not my UK 1.6GHz 256Mb Intel Pentium 4 Gateway PC would work perfectly fine in a different country – the country being Canada. Would I need to change plugs, or is there more to it? Oh yes: I did try the Gateway site, and was about as much use as a screen door on a submarine.

Lochy

A Turn your PC around and look at the back. If there's a little red switch next to the fan outlet with 240V printed on it, you're in luck. When you hit foreign climes, push the little fella

across so it reads 110V. Hey presto: Canadian machine. If you don't have that switch, you'll either need to buy a step-up transformer – an expensive option at around £70 or more – to take you from 110V up to 240V, or replace Gateway's power supply (PSU) with a switchable unit. Almost certainly this will be a standard ATX fit and shouldn't cost you more than £35.

AUTOPERPLEXED

Q I am at present trying to put all my personal files from one computer across to a new machine. This has been going fine until I got to Microsoft Office. I have copied across all personal settings, such as templates and documents, but am unable to transfer all the information that is accessed by the AutoText function. This function I use very frequently for quick entry of addresses and work-related invoicing codes – which now number over 300 entries. As you can imagine, transferring this manually would be quite time-consuming. Is there a file (or files) this information is stored in that I can easily transfer to my new machine?

Clive Christian

A AutoText is stored in Normal.dot – the default document template for Microsoft Word. If you say you've migrated this to your new machine, you should find that you have all AutoText entries available to you. However, AutoCorrect is dealt with differently. It's a rather convoluted process, but it's not impossible. First, you'll need to know what version of Word you're using. If it's Word 97, locate the .ACL file in your C:\Windows directory – it'll be prefixed with your user name (mine is C:\WinNT\philip.wand.accl). If you're using Word 2000, the file will be in your Application Data path and will be prefixed with MSO and then with a number determining which language you are using (MSO2057.accl is UK English). If you can't find it, right-click on your C: icon, select Find or Search from the menu, and look for *.ACL. Copy this file to the same place on your new machine and you're done! [E]



Note the small input voltage selector above the power line.

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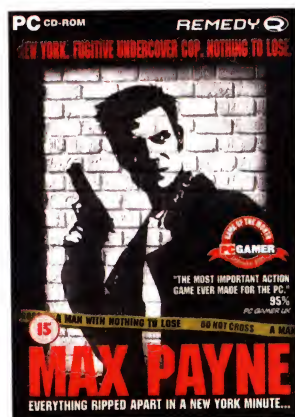
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Please ensure you have permission from the bill payer before calling. Each call to the under 16's number will cost no more than £3.00, and will end at 5 minutes. Mobile phone call charges may vary. Please put any comments and questions in writing to Interactive Telcom Ltd, 8 Grants Walk, PL25 5AA, or email: custserv@cheatsunlimited.com, or call our

Customer Service: 08700 885 656 (BT National Rate applies)

2 GAMES



MAX PAYNE



STRONGHOLD



SERIOUS SAM 2

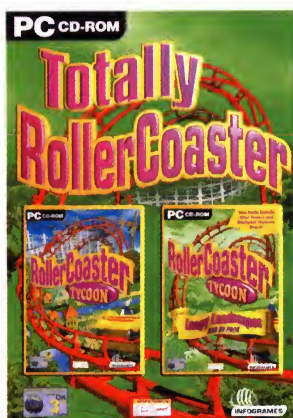


BALDUR'S GATE II:
Shadow's Of Amn

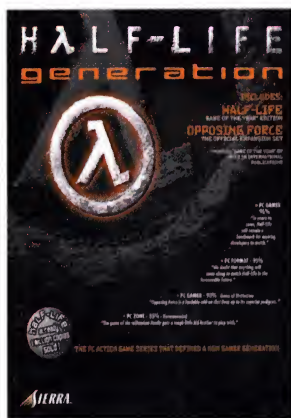
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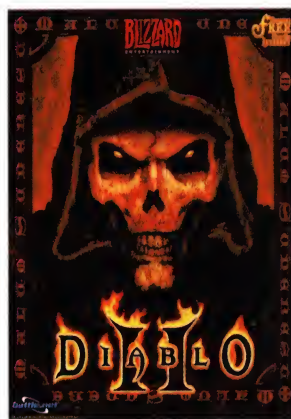
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★ DISCS Matt Cheshire WORDS Rhianna Pratchett



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CD ROM HELP PHONE INTERCHANGE

on 0152 5711 482 any weekday between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday between 10am and 2pm, or email pc_zone@interchange.co.uk. Please do NOT phone the PC ZONE office. Thanks.

BEFORE YOU DIAL... IF YOU ARE CALLING THE HELPLINE, PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING POINTS

★ If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call. ★ If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, soundcard, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault. ★ Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call, so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

★ You need at least a Pentium 266 with 32Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROMs
★ Many of the programs on our cover CDs are designed to run under Windows 95/98 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium II 300 with 64Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run. ★ Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D accelerator only

DISCLAIMER

★ This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it is always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it. ★ Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) that may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.

This month we hit you straight between the eyes with another two CDs packed full of gaming goodness



DEMOS

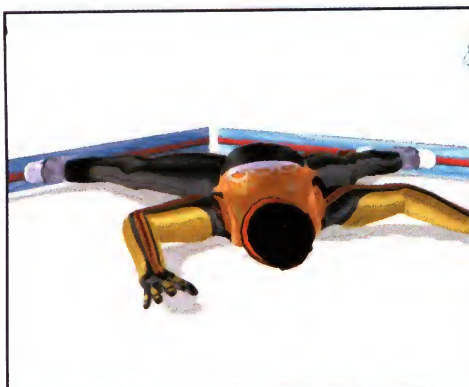
SALT LAKE 2002

Eidos • Disc 1

This officially licensed game of the Salt Lake 2002 Winter Olympics combines six of the actual events from the games in a fluid and realistic environment. The demo lets you participate in

the downhill skiing, (one of the most challenging events and probably our favourite) in Olympic, Tournament and Freeform modes, across five difficulty levels.

CONTROLS Configure in game



⌚ Now that's got to hurt.



ETHERLORDS

Fishtank • Disc 1

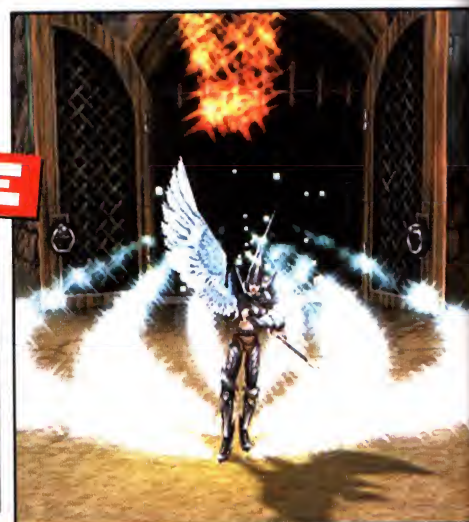
It may not be wildly original in theme, but we were extremely impressed with this stunning and strategically diverse turn-based RTS. The demo contains a single-player campaign (The Three Lakes) and also a dual-player mode. If you're into your strategy but have stayed away from the perhaps unfairly branded 'geeky' turn-based sub-genre, then *Etherlords* might just convert you.

CONTROLS Mouse



⌚ It may not be the biggest name...

EXCLUSIVE



⌚ But we absolutely loved *Etherlords*.

MEDAL OF HONOR

Electronic Arts • Disc 2

MULTIPLAYER

We had the single-player demo and review last issue, now we've got the multiplayer demo to tide you over until you can afford to buy the game. Although there's a heavy emphasis on sniping, the multiplayer game is beautifully balanced and probably the best team-based game going at the moment, shading even the impressive *Wolfenstein* into second place. Believe it, it's true.

CONTROLS

Forward	W
Back	S
Strafe Left	A
Strafe Right	D
Primary Attack	Mouse 1
Secondary Attack	Mouse 2
Walk	Left shift
Use	E
Reload	R
Next Weapon	Mouse wheel
Lean Left	Z
Lean Right	C



Ⓜ Prisoner flambé.

DIE HARD: NAKATOMI PLAZA

Vivendi • Disc 1

The title might be 14 years out of date, but John McLean, everyone's favourite don't-wannabe hero, is back on our PCs and still stuck in Nakatomi Plaza. This demo turns out some surprisingly respectable AI, and sees you assuming the role of the barefooted one as he fights his way through the 39th floor of Nakatomi Towers. Yippee-ki-yay indeed!

CONTROLS

Movement	W, A, S, D
Crouch	Left-Ctrl
Jump	Space
Run	Left shift
Lighter	L
Reload	R
Radio	X
Holster Weapon	H
Mission Objectives	O



Ⓜ Now I have a machine gun. Ho ho ho.



Ⓜ Oh I'm sorry, does that hurt?

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

Activision • Disc 2

It may not be as ground-breaking as its much older brother, but this trip back to Castle Wolfenstein is an impressive exercise in full-throttle firepower and

top-of-the-range graphics. Escape from the castle and then make your way through the zombie-filled catacombs – if your trousers are up to it.

CONTROLS

Movement	W, A, S, D	Crouch	C
Fire	Left mouse button	Reload	R
Look	Right mouse button	Kick	K
Jump	Space	Binoculars	B
Activate	E	Toggle Weapons	1-9



MONOPOLY TYCOON

Infogrames • Disc 1

Almost a world away from the original board game, this version of the money-grabbing classic is more like a real-time management and god game mixed together. There are 13 tutorials to get

you started, and then it's off to the Big Smoke to see if the streets are really paved with gold.

CONTROL Mouse



① Build the businesses and watch the money roll in.

BATTLE REALMS

Ubi Soft • Disc 2



① You don't ever want to go into battle without your trusty steed.

Examples of RTS games that break new ground are sadly few and far between, but this beautiful and atmospheric title does exactly that. A tutorial will take you through the basics of building your economy and military, which you can



① Ponytails are undoubtedly better for fighting in than platts.

put into practice in skirmish mode. Watch out for the beautiful love scenes 'twixt man and horse – something you wouldn't want to miss.

CONTROLS Mouse

SERIOUS SAM: THE SECOND ENCOUNTER

Activision • Disc 2

When it comes to serious fun then Sam is your man, even if he a redneck vest-wearer. Get back in the fray and meet a few familiar faces along the way, while recreating all the best bits of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Wham bam, thank you Sam!

CONTROLS

Movement	W, A, S, D
Fire	Left mouse button
Look	Mouse
Up/Jump	Space/R
Duck/Down	F/C
Reload	Left Alt
Walk	Left shift
Toggle Weapons	1-9



① Aaarrggggghhhhhh!



① The chainsaw is a highly satisfying new weapon.



← SID MEIER'S SIM GOLF

Electronic Arts • Disc 1

It's hard to believe that the brain behind *Civilization* would turn himself to the hobby of ageing bankers in flannel trousers and Noddy-style cars. As you would expect of a *Sim* title, *Sim Golf* is

all about creating the perfect golf course, and this demo lets you master the basics of course building as well as perfecting your swing with the pros.

CONTROLS Mouse



① Mini mini-golf.



① Think you can do better? Build your own.

COMANCHE 4

Novalogic • Disc 2

While the average chopper is not the easiest of beasts to control, the fourth instalment in the *Comanche* series will have you dispatching destruction from the skies in no time. This demo contains one level of the full game.

CONTROLS

Directional Movement W, A, S, D
Altitude Z, X, C
Fire Left mouse button
Select target Right mouse button



① They look so quiet and unassuming on the ground.

MODWATCH CD2

Combat Quake III
Chemical Existence

EXTENDED PLAY CD2

Turn to page 142 where Tony Lamb brings you the best in maps and missions for *Serious Sam* and *Deus Ex*.

HOTSHOTS CD1

THE THING

VU Games • Disc 1

MOVIE



① If you haven't seen the film go out now and rent it – it's a classic.



① Stunning visuals and innovative gameplay – see page 36 for more information.

We have the pleasure of bringing you this fantastic in-game movie of our cover preview (see page 36) *The Thing*. Based around the story from John Carpenter's classic film, this survival

horror picks up where the film left off (Kurt Russell and that other chap freezing their bollocks off waiting to die). Unfortunately it appears that the terror is only just beginning.

NEXT MONTH

New DVD Edition

Watch out for a new DVD edition PC ZONE next issue. With up to 4.3Gb of space we can stick in all the demos and mods we've never had room for before. And, to celebrate its birth we've secured a huge UK exclusive.

We'll be giving away the full version of *Anarchy Online*, complete with a four-week free trial subscription. Look out for it in all major newsagents.

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PCZONE TOP 100

Welcome to the definitive buyer's guide for all PC gamers. The following games are the best 100 games money can buy, split into genres to make your purchases even easier

Have you got money burning a hole in your pocket? If so, make a cheque or postal order payable to PC ZONE and we'll forget about writing the mag and get ourselves down the pub for a good drink-up. If you're not feeling altruistic then perhaps you might want to buy yourself a game, but which one? How can you sort the *Unreal Tournaments* from the *Daikatanas*?

Relax, this is where the PC ZONE Top 100 comes in handy.

Every game listed here is worth buying. If you're a fan of a certain

genre you can head straight for your favourite games, which are ranked in order of brilliance. Some of the games might be a bit long in the tooth but that shouldn't put you off. Most of the old-timers have been re-released on budget and you'll be able to find the rest pretty cheap if you shop around.

The rules are simple. Each month we review a load of games. If any of them are good enough to enter the Top 100 they take their rightful place and the bottom one in that particular genre is consigned to the dustbin

never to return again.

As games are always improving, we re-evaluate all the titles in a genre every time there is a new entry.

Each month we'll also show you the games we think are the Top 10 of all time. This month our dedicated freelancer Paul Presley gets the chance to talk about all the games that he plays when he should be writing stuff for the mag.



WHEN WE SAY CLASSIC, WE MEAN IT

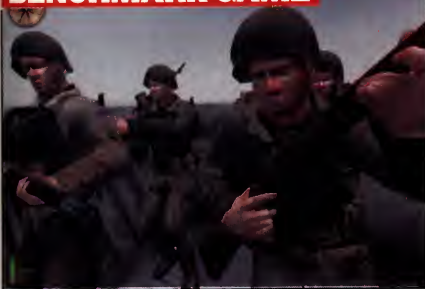
If a game gets a Classic rating (90 per cent or above) in PC ZONE you know it's going to be pretty spectacular. Unlike other organs, we don't shower Classics around like confetti at a royal wedding and you won't find one in every single issue. In fact, from all the games released in 2001 we only

awarded eight classics in total and some of these have been regraded to bring them in line with new releases.

Classics have to have something a bit different. They have to take the genre to new heights or impress with originality. For this reason you should also pay special attention

to the games that receive our Award Of Excellence (80-89 per cent). When we say excellent, we mean excellent, and if you're a fan of the genre these games fall into you won't be disappointed. Put your faith in us and we won't let you down, and that's a promise.

Z
PCZONE
CLASSIC

SHOOTERS**MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSULT****BENCHMARK GAME****PCZ #112 • 94%**

NEWENTRY It's taken years but finally there's a shooter worthy of toppling *Half-Life*. Brilliant level design, surprisingly good AI, an intense atmosphere and beautifully scripted scenes. It's also the first game that Richie has finished three times in as many months which gives you some indication of the game's worth.

PUBLISHER EA • 01932 450134**HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS****PCZ #71 • 93%**

★ *Half-Life* redefined its genre and stood unchallenged as the greatest shooter of all time for exactly three years. It has a cracking atmosphere, a compelling plot and is now bundled with the excellent *Opposing Force* add-on pack and the world's favourite mod, *Counter-Strike*.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100**ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2****PCZ #110 • 93%**

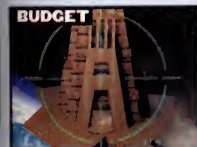
★ The game that finally stacked up to *Half-Life*. The AI is superb and the atmosphere is terrifying, while the action and plot are perfectly paced and masterfully executed. No shooter fan should be without it.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100**MAX PAYNE****PCZ #107 • 89%**

★ It's not big and it's not clever, but for style and content *Max Payne* receives top marks. The character animations and soon-to-be-copied-by-everyone Bullet Time mode are the real stars, it's just a shame it only lasts a few hours.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900**RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN****PCZ #112 • 88%**

NEWENTRY Makes unprecedented use of the *Quake III Team Arena* engine, and graphically it's at the top of the pile. But however slick the execution, this is nothing new.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525**BUDGET****UNREAL TOURNAMENT****PCZ #81 • 87%**

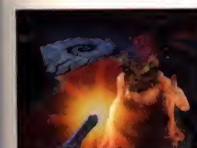
★ Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake III*'s multiplayer, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it's still going to be more than a challenge for most.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8188**QUAKE III ARENA****PCZ #87 • 86%**

★ The biggest brand name in PC gaming is back. The sheer speed, intensity and unrelenting action of *Quake III* make it an essential purchase for all shoot 'em up fans, but sadly the lack of variety prevents it from topping *Unreal Tournament*.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525**SERIOUS SAM: THE SECOND ENCOUNTER****PCZ #112 • 83%**

NEWENTRY This time around the game is bigger, longer and the graphics are even better than before. Not a serious challenger to the FPS crown but unashamedly fun.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900**CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING****PCZ #101 • 82%**

★ This atmospheric game is one of the most unsettling FPSs we've seen. The graphics and superb sound will have you leaping out of your seat. Here's hoping Barker's contribution will help push the future of narrative and gameplay forward.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134**PROJECT IGI****PCZ #97 • 80%**

★ Combining the action of *Soldier Of Fortune* with the stealth of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Project IGI* is the thinking man's FPS. It features vast, open landscapes, and its clever changes of pace and espionage-oriented storyline will keep you engrossed throughout.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000**STRATEGY****SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR: WARLORDS EDITION****BENCHMARK GAME****PCZ #89 • 93%**

★ Command huge armies and engage in epic battles, assassinate generals and conquer your way through feudal Japan. This edition further improves the game's stunning 3D engine and also lets you play as the Mongols. Copious in-game options never get in the way of the instant playability of the game. *Shogun* will blow you away.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134**COMMANDOS 2****PCZ #108 • 91%**

★ There have been a few *Commandos* imitators but none have come close to this sequel. If you loved the first game, you're going to love this World War II strategy game even more. One of the most richly detailed games we've ever seen, absolutely massive, and brimming with ideas.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000**COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS****PCZ #101 • 88%**

★ There are 8,000 troops at your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement and a 3D landscape with real physics modelling make it truly absorbing. With great graphics and sound effects to boot it's an essential purchase.

PUBLISHER CDV • 020 8880 4144**Z: STEEL SOLDIERS****PCZ #101 • 87%**

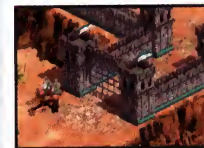
★ Z will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast-paced in-yr-face action that allows you to get down and dirty from the off. The AI is superb, and as it's entirely mouse-driven, it's simple and easy to get into. What more could you ask for?

PUBLISHER EON • 0700 4366344**ETHERLORDS****PCZ #112 • 87%**

NEWENTRY This unexpected gem might just be good enough to convert those who immediately associate 'turn-based' with the word 'geek'. Both visuals and sound are stunning, and combined with staggering tactical variety.

PUBLISHER JoWood • 020 8901 7300**BATTLE REALMS****PCZ #111 • 86%**

★ Emerging from the quagmire of all too similar RTS games this is a genuinely groundbreaking strategy game. It does have its flaws, which include a tedious plot, but the great use of sound, visuals and gameplay shine through.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft 020 8944 9000**AOEII: GOLD EDITION****PCZ #84 • 85%**

★ It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *Age of Empires II*, the gameplay is honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single- and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tiberian Sun* and try this classic RTS.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 5700 2000**BUDGET****GROUND CONTROL****PCZ #92 • 85%**

★ RTSs are increasingly dropping resource management in order to concentrate on strategy. *Ground Control* pulls this off with flair, gorgeous looks and a brilliant camera. If you're after a 3D strategy title but don't fancy samurai, this is the answer.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100**SUDDEN STRIKE****PCZ #96 • 85%**

★ *Sudden Strike* mixes WWII action with a heavy dose of realism in order to create a compelling RTS. Its clever resource management, huge selection of units and separate campaigns make it a must for RTS fans looking for something a bit different.

PUBLISHER CDV • 020 8880 4144**HOMEWORLD: CATAclysm****PCZ #96 • 84%**

★ Relic's mission to improve the already superb 3D RTS *Homeworld* has proved to be a great success. The *Homeworld* universe has been expanded, providing a more elaborate storyline and greater scope for tactical options than its predecessor.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

DEUS EX

BENCHMARK GAME



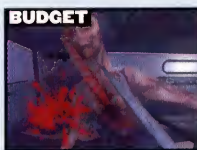
BUDGET

PCZ #93 • 92%

Warren Spector takes the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief* and weaves an RPG of complex beauty that revolutionises computer games. A fascinating sci-fi plot and complete player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is such a landmark wonder.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

BUDGET



SYSTEM SHOCK 2

PCZ #80 • 90%

Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE REDEMPTION

PCZ #92 • 88%

This amazing RPG is a treat to play. An epic storyline, tactical combat and great acting and music more than make up for the fact that it's a linear hack 'n' slash game at heart.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

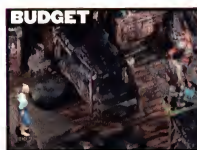


THRONE OF DARKNESS

PCZ #109 • 88%

An enjoyable party-based, strategic hack 'n' slash from the developers of *Diablo*. Take command of seven samurai as they fight their way through feudal Japan on a quest to overthrow the Dark Warlord. Beautiful and bloody.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 9209100



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

PCZ #87 • 87%

An incredible game from Black Isle, creators of *Baldur's Gate*. It's a dark, adult scorch of an RPG. Moreover, the character development is the best we've seen in any game of its kind and the story is compelling, with well-scripted dialogue.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266



BALDUR'S GATE II

PCZ #96 • 85%

The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. Although this sequel is not vastly different, it is bigger, better and extremely addictive. *Baldur's Gate II* is a must for all RPG fans.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

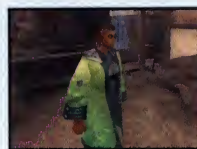


ARCANUM

PCZ #106 • 84%

Whether you play through as a mage or a techy, you'll still find *Arcanum* hugely entertaining. Don't let its looks fool you – it has a great plot and flexible character development. A massive and addictive game.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100



ANACHRONOX

PCZ #105 • 83%

The release of *Anachronox* proves *Deus Ex* wasn't a fluke for Ion Storm. OK, it's not as good, but it's an interesting and genuinely funny game in its own right, and we don't get to say that about many games. Well worth a punt.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000



MAGIC & MAYHEM: THE ART OF MAGIC

PCZ #107 • 80%

This hugely playable game includes a handy 3D camera, along with the type of gameplay that made the first *M&M* so addictive. A must for fans and RPG newbies.

PUBLISHER Virgin Interactive 020 7551 4266



FINAL FANTASY VII

PCZ #66 • 80%

Despite the release of *FFVIII*, we still rate this earlier episode in the series above it. The story is better, there are more sub-games and the whole thing is more involving, especially if you like Japanese-style cartoony graphics. And it's now on budget release.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

ACTION/ADVENTURE

GRIM FANDANGO

BENCHMARK GAME



BUDGET

PCZ #71 • 88%

If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic of its genre. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and, if your mind doesn't work laterally, you'll be playing it until the day you die.

PUBLISHER LucasArts • 020 7368 2255



BUDGET

DISC WORLD NOIR

PCZ #79 • 87%

Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and is all the better for it in our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Terry Pratchett's zany, off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060



SOUL REAVER 2

PCZ #111 • 86%

Undoubtedly the best in the *Blood Omen/Soul Reaver* series, with a great, twisting storyline and an incredibly satisfying combat system. Don't be put off by its console roots because it's one of the best action adventures around.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

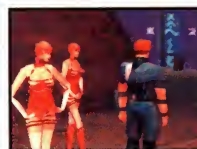


SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS

PCZ #98 • 86%

Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside of *Soldier Of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and console-style combos.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132



THE NOMAD SOUL

PCZ #83 • 86%

Distinctly odd, but original nonetheless, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost manages to pull it off.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



HITMAN: CODENAME 47

PCZ #98 • 85%

Bringing back memories of *Leon* and *Day Of The Jackal*, *Hitman* recreates the cool excitement of carrying out a contract. Snipe from rooftops, disguise yourself in your victims' uniforms and walk away from explosions with calm elegance.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



PROJECT EDEN

PCZ #107 • 85%

You control four variously skilled operatives in a nightmarish future metropolis that is as predictable as it is innovative. The combat and AI may be somewhat dull, but the varied puzzles and raft of cool gadgetry make up for it.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000



BUDGET

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

PCZ #84 • 83%

LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest Indy game, with the adventure elements still in place. Not bad, but not for traditionalists.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525



ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

PCZ #98 • 82%

One of the hardest skills to master when developing a game is the ability to make your audience genuinely laugh with you rather than at you and, undoubtedly, *Escape From Monkey Island* is one of the most genuinely funny games to come out in the last couple of years.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525



METAL GEAR SOLID

PCZ #96 • 82%

Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses makes it stand out from the majority of similar PC titles.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

RACING GAMES**COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0****BENCHMARK GAME****BUDGET****PCZ #98 • 85%**

★ With all the rally games available it was always going to be interesting to see how 2.0 would fare. Unsurprisingly, it blows away the competition. The graphics are superb, the detail all-encompassing and the car handles beautifully. If you have been waiting patiently for the definitive rally game, this is definitely it.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP XTREME PCZ #110 • 85%

★ This equals *Colin McRae 2* as the top PC driving game, but the fact that it costs three times as much means it doesn't quite claim top spot. It plays beautifully and even comes with online options. An essential rally game.

PUBLISHER Actualize • 01477 544 455

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2 PCZ #96 • 84%

★ Buckle up for some high-speed action, as you race around London and San Francisco in this sequel. You won't find a more entertaining arcade driving game. The original *MM* was a better, but with more cars and races and improved controls, *MM2* is now the daddy.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

F1 2001 PCZ #109 • 83%

★ The most versatile F1 game to date, with a full-on sim mode and an arcade setting for those who can't hack it. It looks great as well, but it comes with a huge caveat – if you want to see it as intended you're going to need a hefty machine.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450 134

BALLISTICS PCZ #111 • 82%

★ So you thought *WipEout* was fast? Well, welcome to a new concept in pure racing. It only has seven tracks, but it has an unparalleled speed, with a simple control system that keeps the emphasis on the pure racing dynamics.

PUBLISHER Xicat Interactive • 020 7437 1442

GRAND PRIX 3 PCZ #94 • 80%

★ This F1 title displays all the customary Crammond perfectionism. The detail is amazing, which makes it all the more puzzling as to why there is no teamwork. Don't expect much more than a 3D accelerated GP2, but if that's what you're after you'll love it.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

LE MANS 24 HOURS PCZ #87 • 79%

★ Although not quite as challenging as the race it's based on, *Le Mans 24 Hours* is a driving game for skilful players who know their brakes from their elbows. You can even get involved in a rewarding career mode, culminating in the famous race itself.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

INSANE PCZ #97 • 78%

★ Primarily an online racing game, *Insane* allows you and your friends to indulge in some off-road racing mayhem in a range of different vehicles. Its wide selection of races will have you in hysterics, but the novelty does wear off pretty quickly.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

NEED FOR SPEED PORSCHE 2000 PCZ #90 • 78%

★ Not as good as hooking up with your mates at the arcade, but still a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car around the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this exciting?

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

RALLY MASTERS PCZ #89 • 77%

★ Rally games tend to blend into one another quite seamlessly. After all, the cars look exactly the same and they go round the same tracks. *Rally Masters*, however, offers the all-important feel of a great driving game together with loads of options and some tasty graphics.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

GOD GAMES**BLACK & WHITE****BENCHMARK GAME****PCZ #100 • 93%**

★ One of our joint top games of all time, *Black & White* is worth the hype and more. Hundreds of challenges through wondrous landscapes, packed full of spectacular AI-enhanced creatures and some genuinely original ideas. Sell your friends and family if you have to, but get a copy of this game. Pure genius.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

CIVILIZATION III**PCZ #111 • 86%**

★ *Civ III* sticks to the same gameplay and addictiveness that made the series so popular. Die-hard fans will relish the improved visuals and animation, while newbies will be encouraged by the new user-friendly interface.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

CALL TO POWER II**PCZ #98 • 84%**

★ *Civilization II* is one of the best games of all time, but that doesn't mean it doesn't need updating. It might not have the official *Civ* endorsement, but *Call To Power II* still retains the spirit of the game, while polishing almost every aspect of the gameplay.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

THE SIMS**PCZ #87 • 84%**

★ This offers a staggering amount of possibilities. Essentially, you create your own person, or family, and guide them through the ups and downs of life. It's the definitive docu-soap and makes for compelling gameplay.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

CAESAR III**PCZ #70 • 82%**

★ Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's probably one of the most utterly absorbing and addictive god sims in existence. Hail Caesar.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100

SIMCITY 3000**PCZ #74 • 81%**

★ Ten years on, *SimCity* remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.

PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01932 450134

ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS**PCZ #97 • 81%**

★ From the creators of *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III* comes this intricate yet hugely playable micro-management god game. It is highly addictive, but suffers slightly from its lack of multiplayer options and a poor combat system.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON**PCZ #75 • 80%**

★ Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden dippers to *Nemesis*-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RollerCoaster Tycoon* is hugely addictive. Be warned.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 827 8060

MONOPOLY TYCOON**PCZ #110 • 78%**

★ This mixture of the board game and *Theme Park* is an admirable attempt at something a little different. Played in real time, the aim is to make as much money as possible. Great fun for a while, but it quickly becomes repetitive.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8188

DUNGEON KEEPER 2**PCZ #79 • 75%**

★ *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea. *DKII* takes the essence of the original game, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and doses the myriad of features with a wise hand. And it keeps us very happy indeed.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

SPORTS

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 01/02



PCZ #108 • 92%

⚡ This update for the greatest management game ever sees the series consolidate itself as the best footie management game available on PC. This time around the new features include masked attributes (forcing you to scout for talent), updated team and player stats as well as all the new rules that FIFA has imposed on us. Buy it and kiss life goodbye.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2 PCZ #98 • 88%

⚡ *Pro Skater 2* is an unbelievable experience. The sense of speed and balance is uncanny, and there is almost as much satisfaction to be had from pulling off an acrobatic new move as there is from watching your skater break all his bones as he smashes his face against the concrete.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525



VIRTUAL POOL 3 PCZ #99 • 85%

⚡ *VP3* has the perfect physics and graphics of its predecessors plus some cool new features, including multiplayer options, career mode and training videos by pool diva Jeanette Lee. It's the best pool sim you can buy, and it's almost as good as the real thing.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266



FIFA 2001 PCZ #97 • 83%

⚡ Once again the FIFA franchise gets its yearly makeover. There are only minor improvements over the last version, but it's still the best football game for the PC. The player animations and presentation are spot on, but we can't help feeling there's a better football game to come.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



SUPREME SNOWBOARDING PCZ #85 • 83%

⚡ Snowboarding is not a sport you'd expect to captivate a PC audience, but this game gives as exhilarating an experience as you could hope for without the risk of breaking a leg. Oh, and all the streetwise attitude you'd expect is there too, of course.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060



TENNIS MASTERS SERIES PCZ #110 • 82%

⚡ The best tennis game on the PC so far, but only by a whisker. While the control interface isn't quite as intuitive as *Open Tennis 2000*, the AI is far superior, and the diversity of opponents is much more varied and entertaining.

PUBLISHER Microids • 01908 233 377



PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000 PCZ #92 • 82%

⚡ It's really not much different from last year's title, but this edition has enough subtle tweaks to make it a worthwhile purchase. It also has the best control system we've seen in what is definitely the best golf game available.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100



NBA LIVE 2000 PCZ #85 • 81%

⚡ As slick as always, but what makes this special is the inclusion of teams from the '50s onwards, comedy haircuts and all. It's not quite as immediate as *Inside Drive*, but is a more complete simulation of the sport all round.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



OPEN TENNIS 2000 PCZ #92 • 80%

⚡ Not since *Super Tennis* on the SNES have we had so much fun hitting a ball over a net. After some initial reluctance, the whole office stopped fragging and started lobbing. For a near identical game with slightly better AI, it's worth checking out *Roland Garros French Open 2001*.

PUBLISHER Cryo • 0121 250 5070



NHL 2002 PCZ #110 • 79%

⚡ Even though it's much the same as its predecessor with a couple of extra bells on, *NHL 2002* combines realism with frenetic arcade action. Not for the faint-hearted, but ice hockey fans and arcade game fans will love it.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

3D ACTION/STRATEGY

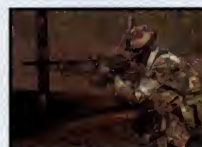
OPERATION FLASHPOINT: COLD WAR CRISIS



PCZ #104 • 90%

⚡ The most anticipated military game of the year was worth all the hype and more. This squad-based shooter can be played in both third- and first-person and is the ultimate military simulation package, with a stunning atmosphere and superb mission structures. Lock yourself away because this game deserves your full attention.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132



GHOST RECON PCZ #110 • 86%

⚡ A superb squad-based shooter, which masterfully combines tactics and action. The levels range from wide-open landscapes to claustrophobic city streets, in what is a stunning evocation of special forces warfare.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000



HIDDEN & DANGEROUS PCZ #79 • 86%

⚡ You don't get a second chance in a real war, and *Hidden & Dangerous* is the game that comes closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. It grabs you by the balls from the first mission and doesn't let up.

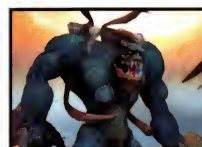
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900



HOSTILE WATERS PCZ #101 • 86%

⚡ A brilliant RTS/action game you can play purely strategically or leap into a unit and get up close and personal to the action. It's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options though. Why make love when you can make war?

PUBLISHER Rage • 01512 372200



GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO PCZ #95 • 84%

⚡ This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game includes third-person shooter, RTS, RPG and real-time combat elements. It also features a superbly balanced multiplayer option and almost naked women, which usually makes for a good time.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266



SWAT 3: ELITE EDITION PCZ #97 • 83%

⚡ AI doesn't come much better. The spectacular graphics and command system come alive here. Although not as fun as *Counter-Strike*, it's more realistic, and features five new maps and countless weapon configurations.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100



ROGUE SPEAR: BLACK THORN PCZ #110 • 81%

⚡ Although the graphics engine is looking dated, this is the best *Rogue Spear* outing to date. Featuring nine new linked and suspense-filled special forces missions, even veterans of the series will be challenged to their limits.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000



SPEC OPS 2 PCZ #84 • 79%

⚡ When *Spec Ops 2* came out it challenged *Hidden & Dangerous* for the top spot. The game puts you in charge of a four-man green beret squad intent on staying alive and shooting the enemy in the head. Incredibly realistic, with top-notch sound.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900



RAINBOW SIX GOLD PACK EDITION PCZ #81 • 79%

⚡ A landmark game in third-person action strategy games that was only surpassed by *Hidden & Dangerous*. Take control of your elite anti-terrorist squad, plan your missions ahead and indulge in some old fashioned killing. Also contains the *Eagle Watch* add-on pack.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 854 444



WARGASM PCZ #71 • 76%

⚡ Famed for its flight sims, DID finally delivers an action game only it could produce. With helicopters, APCs and hapless infantry running about, this is as fast-paced as a tank game could be – and it's even better to share.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 827 8000

FLIGHT SIMS

IL-2 STURMOVIK

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #110 • 90%

★ Combining an incredible atmosphere, sound and visuals with possibly the most realistic flight model to date, *IL-2* puts you behind the stick of a number of stunningly reproduced WWII combat planes. The attention to detail is breathtaking and the easy-to-use editor allows endless months of replayability. A must-have for any real combat flight sim fanatic.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000



MS FLIGHT SIM 2002

PCZ #111 • 88%

★ With more polish than previous versions, this professional edition offers players more planes, extra flight logging and improved graphics. If civil aviation's up your alley, then take to the skies like never before.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000



BATTLE OF BRITAIN

PCZ #103 • 88%

★ Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, the skies are crowded and the flight models actually 'feel right'. Tally ho!

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337



BUDGET

FALCON 4

PCZ #72 • 87%

★ We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* features incredible 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060



BUDGET

B-17: THE MIGHTY 8TH

PCZ #96 • 85%

★ *B17* reproduces the experience of piloting a WWII bomber. Everything's covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

SPACE COMBAT

X - GOLD

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #82 • 87%

★ The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side of the gameplay may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. This title is deeply hypnotic and beautiful, rather than tense and frenetic.

PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656



TERMINUS

PCZ #93 • 86%

★ Who says the days of bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and passion. It just edges out *FreeSpace 2*. Available from www.macgames.co.uk.

PUBLISHER Vicarious Visions • www.vvisions.com



BUDGET

FREESPACE 2

PCZ #84 • 85%

★ Completely different from *X*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It boasts a superb interface, an epic story and amazing graphics, but it's a bit short-lived if you don't play online.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

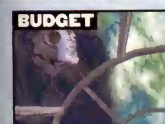


EDGE OF CHAOS: INDEPENDENCE WAR 2

PCZ #104 • 83%

★ It's likely to appeal more to die-hard space simmers, but *Edge Of Chaos* still takes steps to advancing the genre. Its graphics and absorbing free-form gaming are inspirational.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 827 8000



BUDGET

X-WING: ALLIANCE

PCZ #77 • 81%

★ At last. Fly the Millennium Falcon in the final episode of the long-running *X-Wing* series. Certainly the best-looking *X-Wing* game to date, *Alliance* is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

ALL-TIME CLASSICS



Shut it granddad, no one cares. **Paul Presley** goes all rheumy-eyed, misty-brained and arthritic-limbed as he presents his all-time top ten, here in chronological order (which gives you some idea how ancient he is)



MOONMIST (PC)

★ Typical, he starts with a text adventure. Regardless *Moonmist* got me hooked on the whole adventure game genre, mainly because it scared the hell out of me just by printing "You hear footsteps in the distance" every thirty seconds on the screen. Sod it, throw the whole Infocom back catalogue in here will you?



MINDER (ZX SPECTRUM)

★ *Elite* in a Jaguar set in the East End of London. Pioneering use of 'cockney' text input system meant you could write phrases like "I'll give you a monkey for it" and be understood. Buying and selling things like dodgy videos, interrupting Tel while he was 'entertaining', nudey calendar on the lock-up wall. Class on a stick.



SKOOL DAZE (SPECTRUM)

★ Although it might just be the hazy fog of nostalgia clouding the mind, I still seem to remember the adventures of tearaway school kid Eric being a work of near genius. If just for the simple fact you could write rude words on the blackboards. I've got the emulated version around here somewhere...



THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND (PC)

★ Not the second one mind you. I'm talking the full-on, plot-branching, insult sword-fighting, rubber chicken with a pulley in the middle, Fettuccini Brothers, giant monkey head-cleaning original item. Kept me and my brother in stitches for several weeks. I can still hum the theme tune. Funniest. Game. Ever.



ULTIMA IV (PC)

★ Sure many people consider numbers VI and VII to be the best of the bunch, but this fourth entry had me glued to my computer for months as I tried to finish the quest, master the virtues and stop lolo from being hungry every ten minutes. Failed on all three counts as I remember.



DAVID LEADBETTER'S GOLF (PC)

★ Understand, I am never going to stop beating this particular drum. There never has been and like as much never will be any golf game as good as this one. Everything, and I mean everything you need in a golf game was in here, from handicaps to careers to foot stance alteration.



SOUL CALIBUR (DREAMCAST)

★ See, here's the thing. *Street Fighter* turned me off the whole beat 'em up genre for life. Unless you were a teenage Asian boy with lightning-fast fingers, there just wasn't much point even trying in London. But then *Soul Calibur* came along and I was hooked again. I rule with Hwang Sung Kyung by the way.



SUPER SMASH BROTHERS (N64)

★ This Nintendo 'beat 'em up' has made me more money than any other game. Mainly because many a Saturday night/Sunday morning would be spent on four-player tournaments for cash. Although if I hear a high-pitched "Pika-CHUUUU!" one more time... Probably shouldn't confess this but *Wrestlemania 2000* was played as well.



HOMEWORLD (PC)

★ Just as I never thought I'd play a beat 'em up until *Soul Calibur* came along, so I never really got into strategy games until this Canadian epic made an appearance. Of course I haven't played any others since either but that's not the point. I don't need to, this one's perfect.



OPERATION FLASHPOINT (PC)

★ Bang up-to-date with the best FPS I've ever played. I like games requiring thought over the instant kill nature of the *Quakes* and *Unreals* et al. Wait though, not enough room. I want another ten. What about *Covert Action*, *F-22 TAW*, *GoldenEye*, *MS-R*, *Archimedian Dynasty*, *Elite*, *Midwinter*, *Quartet*, *System 15000*, *Protocol*...

AUGUST 1988

RETRO ZONE

Dustin Hoffman had *Rain Man*, George Michael had *Faith*, and Paul Presley had his first job in the games industry

CARRIER COMMAND

In which you unsurprisingly, command a carrier

They don't make them like this any more. Or rather they do, but they usually get them wrong. For a while in the '80s it seemed that 80 per cent of all games released involved fighting for control of a series of war-torn islands (see *Midwinter II*, *Hunter*, er... *Rainbow Islands?*) and *Carrier Command* was no different in that respect. Where it did stand apart from the rest of the 16-bit dross was in the surprising levels of

strategic depth involved. And it had naval carriers that could sail across land. But that was a bug.

Part war game, part action sim, *Carrier Command* saw you using the SS Epsilon to fight for control of a group of islands, pitted against a similar – but evil – carrier. To achieve this end you could use remote-piloted aircraft, amphibious ground vehicles and defence drones, all of which could be given orders, waypoints and the

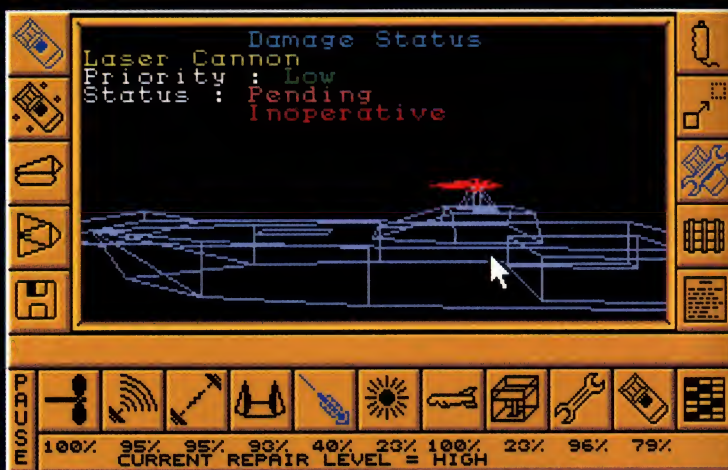
like. The closest we've had to it since was *Rage's Hostile Waters*.

It also pioneered the use of an iconic control system, was one of the first games to make the player consider supply lines and manage resources, came in bright yellow colours for the kids, and blew everyone away when it arrived (although anyone that tells you they ever managed to conquer more than two islands is a lying scumbag as it was impossible to complete).

Still, the mix of strategy and action could be said to be the forerunner of every real-time strategy game since, from *Command & Conquer* to *Homeworld*. The strangest thing is that it still holds up over time. Usually these recollections are ruined the moment an emulated version comes into view, but *Carrier Command* still retains the same level of playability today as it did then. Which probably proves something.

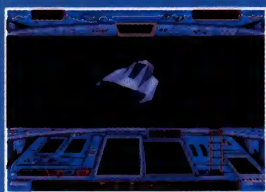


Icon-tastic mate. As they said at the time.



State-of-the-art warplanes.

THE BEST OF THE REST



STARGLIDER II
(Atari ST/Amiga/PC)

Touted at the time as the new *Elite*, Argonaut's 3D extravaganza was more shoot 'em up than trade-athon. Still, it was in space and in 3D, with the bonus of being able to fly onto planet surfaces and blow things up. As with a lot of Argonaut's offerings, it was impressive technology looking for a better game.



ROCKET RANGER
(Atari ST/Amiga/PC)

The mighty Cinemaware were starting to run out of steam, but *Rocket Ranger* was still an attractive enough title to warrant attention. One of those 1930s jetpack-hero stories, *Rocket Ranger* had all the quality dramatics we'd come to know and love from the team behind *It Came From The Desert* and *Defender Of The Crown*.



SUPER HANG-ON
(Arcade)

One of the first arcade machines to break free of the traditional stand-up cabinet design, *Super Hang-On* had a tilting motorbike chassis bolted to the front for punters to sit on. Since it was all done with motorised hydraulics, a common sight in 1988 was that of young kids skidding across the arcade carpets as they tried to take corners too sharply.



VIRUS
(Archimedes)

Virus was one of the only games ever released for the short-lived Archimedes (the 16-bit's answer to the 3D0). Made by David Elite Braben, it was a spectacular 3D *Defender*-ish sort of thing, set across a series of war-torn islands (told you so). Since only about seven people owned the machine, it was never going to make the big time.



POOL OF RADIANCE
(PC)

And lo, it came to pass that *Dungeons & Dragons* finally madeth an official appearance on thy gaming scene. And it was sure to rocketh thine world. Many RPGs had 'borrowed' D&D elements in the past, but *Pool Of Radiance* was the first to actually have the licence. It's still going strong today with *Baldur's Gate* and co.

LEISURE SUIT LARRY IN THE LAND OF THE LOUNGE LIZARDS

Make mine a double

Long before the Internet pornography industry led the field in age verification software, one man with rather too much time on his hands was redefining the term 'adult gaming'. Prior to the *Larry* series, all 'adults' had to play with, digitally speaking, were various strip poker games courtesy of Anco.

Luckily Al Lowe was here to change that. With Sierra riding high on the success of its *King* and *Police Quest*

series, the time was ripe to tap into the Americans' new-found love of Benny Hill. Hence the appearance of a fat, '70s throwback with receding hair who couldn't pull to save his life, despite being surrounded by hot babes at every turn. All this, if you can imagine it, in point-and-click adventure form. The humor [sic] may have been sub-*Carry On* in quality, but that was good enough for the

Yanks and we had to endure about five sequels until someone finally got the message through that no one was laughing.

All is not lost though. Even though Lowe has long since hung up his spurs, the spirit of *Larry* lives on in such games as *Erotica Island*. Not that you or I have ever played such filth, obviously. Cough.



① One of the many, er, babes on offer.



② Check those eyebrows.



③ He's in there.

STOP PRESS

GAMING NEWS FROM AUGUST '88

④ The 'kids in their bedrooms' start to make an impact in the financial markets as more than 7 million Nintendo Entertainment Systems (the precursor to the Super NES) are sold in the US alone, taking video game sales above the \$1 billion mark for the first time in history.

It's the beginning of the end as the first signs of suits sniffing at the outskirts of our grand little hobby are sighted.

⑤ The most aptly named game in history arrives on the shelves. A conversion of *Impossible Mission* (not to be confused with a popular TV series still doing the rounds at the time) for the Atari 7800 console hits the stores and, as well as being bloody difficult from a gameplay point of view, is also *actually* impossible to complete due to a small bug that found its way onto the final code. The game is immediately pulled from shops and only a few copies still exist in the hands of dedicated collectors.

⑥ A revolution in gaming controllers is, ahem, not just around the corner as a former CEO of Atari (they were a big company at the time, honest), puts together a crack team of scientists, hardware engineers, researchers, programmers and neurophysiologists. Despite having enough brainpower to effectively rule the world from a secret

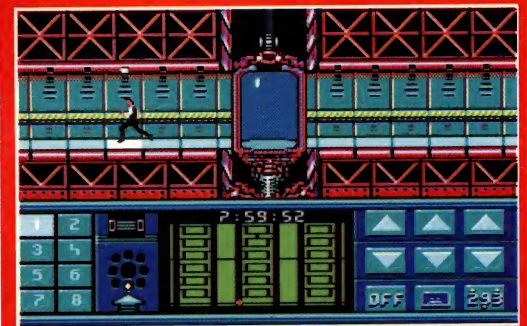
underground base, it doesn't take long for the 'nerd' gene to kick in and they decide instead to develop new forms of game controllers that respond to human emotions, much like those polygraph machines. Nothing is ever heard from them again.

⑦ A tiny little company is started in San Francisco by a Mr Sim Wong Hoo. Creative Labs Inc. is, in fact, an offshoot of the larger Creative Technology Corporation, and its brand new Game Blaster soundcard, bringing stereo audio effects to the PC is just the beginning.

⑧ In Britain a popular new games mag, *The One Magazine*, launched several months previously, takes a huge risk in employing a badly dressed youngster with odd hair. Many years later he would be sitting at this very keyboard reflectively, struggling in vain as yet another deadline sails past into the distance. Self-indulgent? Moi?



⑨ The ultimate entertainment for the bedroom-bound teenager.



⑩ *Impossible Mission* was impossible to complete.

EXTENDED PLAY

Maps and missions for two very different FPS games this month. *Serious Sam* leads the way with an old-skool-style frag-fest, whilst cerebral role-player/shooter *Deus Ex* satisfies the gaming needs of those who want to intellectualise about their enemies before blowing them away

★ GETTING SERIOUS Tony Lamb

TRY IT YOURSELF



Installation of all these maps and missions is pretty straightforward, but remember to always check out .zip files for any special instructions – some of the files do use custom textures and sounds.

For *Serious Sam*, map files unzip into your '<drive>\croteam\serious sam' folder and can then be accessed from the Single Player > Custom Level menu or by Multiplayer map selection.

Deus Ex maps unzip into the '<drive>:\deusex\maps' folder and can then be selected in-game (making sure you have the multiplayer patch installed). Again, read the help or readme.txt files as some maps have specific installation or start-up routines.

SERIOUS SAM

Croteam's *Serious Sam* proved to be something of a refreshing change when we looked at it back in Issue 102. While it was never going to scale the giddy heights dominated by *Half-Life* and *Unreal Tournament*, it did however sparkle in many ways. And for sheer *Doom*-style fun it's hard to beat – especially now as a budget buy. With its custom-made 3D engine, massive outdoor vistas, hordes of monsters on screen and wacky humour it has a lot going for it. Even though the enemy AI is dismal, this is usually outweighed by the sheer number of them attacking at once. This isn't a brain-teasing game – in fact, all you'll need is a quick trigger finger, lots of bullets, and a talent for ducking and dodging – but damn it's fun.

★ La Entrada

Author: Nod Tugud
Filename: 01_LaEntradaDe Dios.zip
Size: 13.8Mb
Rating: ○○○○○

La Entrada is an exercise in madness, and one of the weirdest level designs yet – even by in-yer-face FPS standards. It's a deathmatch map, and while there are a few monsters lurking here and there, they aren't enough to

give anyone a problem. This map is full of bizarre twists, hidden corners, difficult to reach weapons and some serious weirdness. It might not be to everyone's taste, but you can't deny its individuality.



① Entrada is totally over the top.

★ Canyon Run

Author: Trisk
Filename: canyonrun.zip
Size: 5Mb
Rating: ○○○○○
Canyon Run is more of a survival test than anything else, as you fight your way through a series of steep-walled, interconnecting gullies, blasting your rapidly depleting ammunition at ever more fearsome enemies. You'll come across every nasty that the game can throw at you, and often in numbers that would make any sane man turn on his heels and run. For blast-a-bout action, this is great fun, with a speeding spiral slide to an equally blood-spattered, white-knuckle finish.



① At this range, he's toast.

★ Desert City

Author: Kristo
Filename: desertcity.zip
Size: 843Kb
Rating: ○○○○○
Desert City is a single-player map with Egyptian architecture, lots of monsters, hard-to-find trigger switches, and loads of action. You'll need to be on your guard and pay attention to your

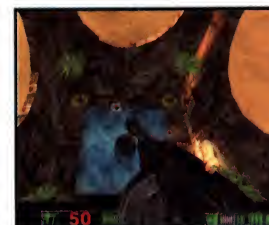
surroundings, as the switches can be hard to spot. This map is very processor hungry – there are a lot of buildings, monsters and explosions likely to be on screen at any one time – and it's an absolute blast, but you might want to consider cutting down the screen detail before playing it.



① Desert City certainly isn't short of enemies to frag.

★ Nefarious

Author: Pompey
Filename: nefarious.zip
Size: 471Kb
Rating: ○○○○○
Nefarious is a deathmatch map that makes good use of its few interconnected rooms, each of which has its own style, with a variety of moving platforms, jump-pads, slippery floor surfaces and an underwater tunnel too. Beware however, as all that glitters isn't gold in this map, and a couple of apparently attractive routes are in fact booby traps. Woe betide anyone who falls for them.



① Nefarious is a weird deathmatch layout... and maybe a bit too weird for some.

★ Framewarp

Author: Forager
Filename: framewarp.zip
Size: 7.7Mb
Rating: ○○○○○
Framewarp is a highly enjoyable single-player add-on with a cut-

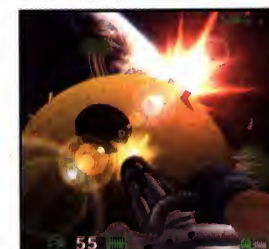
scene starter that introduces you to its modern city location. It's essentially a progression of completely outrageous shoot-outs as you work your way deeper into the monster's lair and find yourself under increasingly heavy attack. There's nothing easy about this map – even in the lower skill settings you'll have to use all your frag-festing skills to survive, but if you can keep on making it to the health and ammo packs you might just live... for a while anyway.



① As usual, Sam's surrounded by birds...

★ MoonFrag

Author: Pompey
Filename: moonfrag.zip
Size: 363Kb
Rating: ○○○○○
Moonfrag is a guaranteed-action deathmatch map and, despite its diminutive size, it's great fun. The moon itself is small, with a few lush, oasis-like weapons' stashes and a couple of water pits that also hide some goodies. Beware the water and other pits though, as even with the low-gravity set-up of this map, they can be a devil to get out of. If you like high-flying action, get onto one of the walls, run over the blue star pattern, and hold on to your false teeth as you soar into orbit.



① Get yourself into orbit in Moonfrag to really enjoy yourself.



Nebulus

Author: Pompey
Filename: nebulus.zip
Size: 6.3Mb
Rating: ●●●●●

Nebulus is a deathmatch map for two to ten players, based around a single, giant tower standing in the middle of an industrial power plant area. In its heart runs a huge water column, which can be accessed, from the outside as a means of entry (there are other ways in too, don't worry). Beware lava traps and some seriously big drops from the top down to ground level. There are lots of neat touches in this map, but plenty of players are essential if it is to be properly enjoyed.



ⓘ The deathmatch tower in Nebulus is some 250m tall.

Memories of Duum

Author: IrCarx
Filename: duum.zip
Size: 3.7Mb
Rating: ●●●●●

Another fight-your-way-through-the-monsters single-player add-on that eschews the Egyptian-style architecture of the original, setting itself instead in a *Doom*-like maze of grey concrete block walls and steel matting floors. Don't expect top-class architecture here – you won't find it (although there is a rather cool gravity level at the end) – but if you enjoy a good blast-a-bout you won't go far wrong.



ⓘ Keep your ammo stocks up in Duum, and make sure you practice your circle-strafe.

PlanetKleer

Author: Kristo
Filename: planetkleer.zip
Size: 1.2Mb
Rating: ●●●●●

PlanetKleer is a neat single-player map, and as you make your way through the set-piece battles a series of challenges will be posed to tease you (apart from simple survival of course). The first open



PlanetKleer sees you run into serious firepower from the start.

space has four pedestals – each with an element symbol to be collected (which appear in sequence, not all together). Grabbing them unleashes an onslaught against you – which of course gets more and more difficult. The open spaces allow for some good circle-strafting tactics to come into play, and against the end-of-map Lava Golems you'll need to move fast.



ⓘ Well, it happens to us all at some point.

Rage Map Pack

Author: Kleer
Filename: rage.zip
Size: 2.9Mb
Rating: ●●●●●

This is a group of three deathmatch maps – Xenorage, Cyrorage and Thaltorage – which see you scrapping your way around three planets of the Ragonosis system.

Cyrorage provides a more conventional, maze-like deathmatch environment, with a number of small rooms and connecting corridors in a hub arrangement. Blue pools of instant death sit in most rooms and make access to weapons and armour a little more difficult. There are lots of weapons available, and the small size and styling of the map make for frantic close combat.

Thaltorage is another sequence of interconnecting rooms, corridors and water channels with a couple of nasty traps that will quickly squish the player who doesn't look where he's going. What sets this map apart however is the addition of a

deathmatch arena at the top of the map, which has some more serious fun potential.

Xenorage is a series of adjoining rooms, each leading to the other and creating a giant loop. Each room has its own style. For example, one is good for hiding behind obstacles to take pot shots at enemies. Another is just a giant spiral staircase with nowhere to hide, or there's a close-quarter battle arena of blue pillars. There are also several booby traps to kill the unwary.



ⓘ Xenorage needs lots of players to make the most of it.

Return of the Gnaar

Author: Skier
Filename: return_of_the_gnaar.zip
Size: 4.2Mb
Rating: ●●●●●

Starting this map to find the coach gun in front of you should be a strong hint about how frantic the action is going to get. Blast your way through and try to survive the onslaught before making it out to the desert and a swarm attack by beheaded kamikazes. Get into the other building across the desert, fight more of the same (and more, and more)... and then home for tea and buns.



ⓘ Only babies, but the Gnaar just won't stop.

NET ADDRESSES

www.pczone.co.uk

The coolest PC gaming website on the Net, bar none.

SERIOUS SAM

www.3dactionplanet.com/serioussam/index

Probably the single biggest *Serious Sam* resource out there and an unmissable resource for single- and multiplayer maps, mods, tutorials, news, FAQs and a lot more. You won't want to miss this.

www.3dactionplanet.com/serioussam/warped/index

Homepage for the Seriously Warped deathmatch mod and the 'A Few Screws Loose' modding team. Find out about the mod, and what's happening to it next – it's all here.

www.serpentskiss.com/serious/downloads

A good site to find some of the latest maps, news, reviews, and more.

http://www.langton5.freemove.co.uk/

Homepage for Pompey, who did the Nebulus, Moonfrag and Nefarious maps. Watch this one for new releases...

SAM BE DAMNED

MAP OF THE MONTH
SERIOUS SAM

Author: SteelHORN
Filename: sambdamned_v10.zip
Size: 15.3Mb
Rating: ●●●●●

Sam Be Damned is a full-blown adventure in two parts, which sees you tasked with a mission to kill the self-proclaimed mayor of Amsterdam (yes, really), a Highlander Reptiloid called Jyrad. You have to go to the cinema in Palace Square, get the access code to enter the palace, and then go in and kill him. It sounds simple... but that doesn't mean it is.

Part Two is a straight follow-on, and sees Sam in the aftermath of his mission to kill Mayor Jyrad. Was he successful? Did he kick Reptiloid ass or did he fail dismally? Only by playing through Part One will you know. Sam Be Damned is a seriously good add-on for *Serious Sam*, with well-thought-out maps, a crafted storyline, great use of humour, well-placed enemies and an all-round feeling of cohesion. Top class.



DEUS EX

Deus Ex opened many an eye and slackened a couple of jaws too when it thumped down onto the desks of *ZONE* towers, and it wasn't long before it had taken pride of place at the top of our list of top ten RPG games. As a combination of adrenaline-filled blaster and cerebral thinking game it's tough to beat, appealing to a broad spectrum of gaming fans, and satisfying lovers of both genres. *Deus Ex* sits at the other end of the gaming scale from *Serious Sam*, employing the 'Ask questions first, shoot if necessary' attitude that would confuse good ol' Sam from the outset. If you like your shoot-'em-up games, but want a superb plot to boot, then *Deus Ex* is the game for you.

Ambrosia Mine

Author: Bloodbrada
Filename: dxmp_ambrosia_mine.zip
Size: 467Kb
Rating: ★★☆☆☆
Ambrosia Mine is a small deathmatch map that looks good but is hampered by its limited size – if you put too many players in here the action would be overpoweringly manic. It's still a nice design though, so keep the player numbers down and enjoy.



So Ambrosia is green then?

House Arrest

Author: Old Granddad
Filename: dxmp_housearrest
Size: 2.8Mb
Rating: ★★☆☆☆
House Arrest has lots going for it. A relaxed atmosphere, custom music and good use of design and texture make for an unconventional *Deus Ex* environment. It's a fair size too, so bigger teams are an option here.



Teampay can really come into action in House Arrest.

Arena

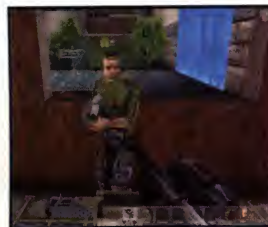
Author: Jamie Frisco
Filename: dxmp_arena.zip
Size: 776Kb
Rating: ★★☆☆☆
Arena pays homage to *Gladiator*-style scrapping with an enjoyable, evocative design for fans of the film of the same name. Again it's not ideal for large player numbers, so sharpen your swords and choose a few close friends to chop to ribbons.



Great for roasting marshmallows on very long sticks.

Count Castle

Author: Tony Counts
Filename: dxmp_countcastle.zip
Size: 438Kb
Rating: ★★☆☆☆
Count Castle is another small deathmatch map with a good design, but again severely limited in terms of player numbers by its own size: four or maybe six at the most. Design is simple – a yard surrounded by a wall with two towers overlooking – but a few more items of interest would have been a good idea.



This chap'll let you shoot him again and again.



Count Castle is fun in small player numbers, but can get easily swamped.

Towers

Author: Face
Filename: dxmp_towers.zip
Size: 703Kb
Rating: ★★☆☆☆
Towers is a deathmatch map where the good sniper can be king of all he surveys. A number of tall buildings dot the map, so keep indoors or use the

underground tunnels if you want to avoid the long-range killers. Also on the CD is Towers2 which is a beta map by the same author, and part of the upcoming *Disclosure* mod. Check out the Web Address listings below for more details.



Just another boring day in the office.

Tribute Park

Author: Bloodbrada
Filename: dxmp_tribute_park.zip
Size: 393Kb
Rating: ★★☆☆☆
Tribute Park is a good, outdoors environment deathmatch map with effective sniper positions in the corner towers, a grassy field and building in the middle, and a few more turrets than is strictly necessary in a map this size. Teampay is the way to go with this map, and turret control could swing the game.



Tribute is great for teampay games, but beware the snipers and turrets.

Wild West

Author: Jamie Frisco
Filename: dxmp_wild_west.zip
Size: 1.3Mb
Rating: ★★☆☆☆
Wild West is a total surprise as a *Deus Ex* deathmatch map, and you'll keep on expecting Wyatt Earp or Billy the Kid to pop up and take a few shots at you. Sure enough, it's a Western town design with a bank, saloon and other buildings just as you might imagine them. Very different and very enjoyable.



One spawn point is in the bank safe – how cool is that?

DOUBLE CROSS CHAPTER 1 (MISSION)

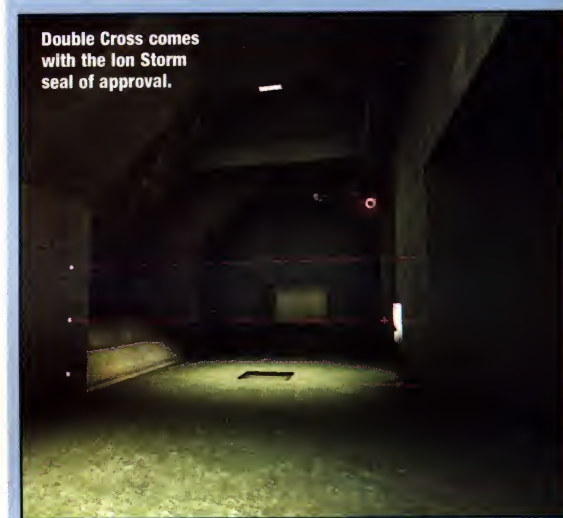
MAP OF THE MONTH
DEUS EX

Author: Tristan Blease
Filename: jh1-dc-ch1.zip
Size: 1.8Mb
Rating: ★★☆☆☆

Double Cross is one of only a few third-party missions for *Deus Ex*, and the quality of this add-on is reflected by the fact that it won first place in a *Deus Ex* single-player contest sponsored by Ion Storm. Heady praise indeed. The introduction is simple – with the Majestic-12 incident behind him and a life of peace and tranquillity approaching, JC Denton takes a phone call from old friend Alex Jackson. Suddenly that easy lifestyle looks very remote indeed...



Get your shades and long black coat ready.



Double Cross comes with the Ion Storm seal of approval.

NET ADDRESSES

DEUS EX

www.planetdeusex.com

The biggest and the best games usually have a Planet website and this is the one for *Deus Ex*. A great resource and a top bookmark.

www.planetdeusex.com/deusedx

A great help for anyone interested in modding *Deus Ex* with helpful information by the bucketload.

www.planetdeusex.com/dea

Homepage of the *Deus Ex* assassins. News, downloads and lots more.

www.facedesigns.co.uk

Homepage of Face, designer of the Towers maps. Keep an eye open here for news of the *Disclosure* mod and other map downloads.

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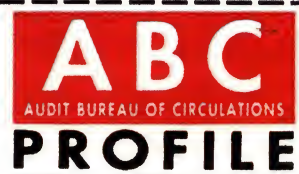
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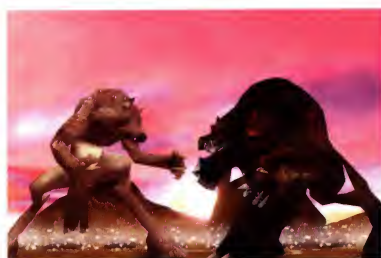
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